



**TOP 30**  
**UNDER 30**  
2020

November 27 at 5 p.m.

The awards ceremony will be  
live-streamed on [www.kyivpost.com](http://www.kyivpost.com)

**Kyiv Post**

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**Kyiv Post**  
UKRAINE'S GLOBAL VOICE

This is the 5th anniversary of our Kyiv Post Top 30 Under 30 Awards, which means we've honored 150 of the most outstanding young Ukrainians since 2016. So many of the previous winners are making major contributions to public and private life in Ukraine that we feel great about the choice to this day.

Each year brings a new crop of winners that gives the nation hope for a better future. This year's star class is no different.

Take a look at the profiles in this magazine. We believe the jury found the best of the best from more than 250 nominations. The jury included Kyiv Post staff, former Top 30 Under 30 winners and the International Renaissance Foundation, our partner. The winners are almost evenly split between the sexes, with women holding the slight 16-to-14 edge. As evidence of the talent that exists throughout Ukraine, many are natives of towns and cities far from the capital.

Professions represented include: Lawyer, athlete, entrepreneur, writer, poet, journalist, educator, pilot, medic, film director, bicycling activist, app developer, financial specialist, singer, non-profit executive, cardiologist, war veteran, videographer. And some winners combine more than one career! But they all share these common characteristics: talent, passion, ambition, patriotism.

Of course, countless numbers of young Ukrainians are deserving of this award. This annual exercise of choosing 30 people for the spotlight is a worthy one. It has become a favorite for readers and the Kyiv Post staff. None of this would have been possible in 2020 without the financial support of the International Renaissance Foundation, which has made Ukraine a better place through the 10,000 projects it has supported with \$310 million in 30 years.

**The 2020 ceremony for the Top 30 Under 30 Awards will take place on Nov. 27 at 5 p.m. It will be live-streamed on the Kyiv Post website, Facebook page, and YouTube.**

Beverage partner



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**Ukraine**

## 2016 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



Bogdan Globa



Kateryna Istomina



Daria Kaleniuk



Olga Kharlan



Yulia Kirillova



Yulia Klymyshyn



Sviat Sviatnenko



Yulia Marushevska



Sevgil Musayeva-Borovyk



Mykhailo Obolonskyi



Yana Panfilova



Ivan Pasichnyk



Ivan Prymachenko



Ganna Rizatdinova



Yulia Sanina



Natalie Sedletska



Daria Shapovalova



Alyona Shkrum



Oleksiy Skvordiyakov



Iryna Slavinska



Anastasia Sleptsova



Iryna Suslova



Alina Sviderska



Yulia Sychikova



Anastasia Topolskaia



Yulia Tychivska



Oleksander Usyk



Lesiya Vasylenko



Yana Zinkevych



Valeriy Chybinyev

## 2017 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



Yaroslav Azhnyuk



Maria Berlinska



Solomia Bobrovska



Nataliya Boyko



Pavlo Budayevsky



Bogdan Chaban



Maksym Chernysh



Vitaliy Diatlenko



Rimma El Joueidi



Illia Filipov



Margo Gontar



Roman Hryshchuk



Liza Kostyrkina



Alyona Kryvulyak



Alexandra Kutas



Darya Leshchenko



Iryna Lytovchenko



Bogdan Logvynenko



Oleksandr Maksymenko



Natalya Mazharova



Dmytro Schebetyuk



Yulia Shevchuk



Elina Svitolina



Oleksandr Todorchuk



Oleksandr Toporivsky



Roman Tychivsky



Oleg Verniaiev



Stepan Veselovskyi



Hordyslava Yemets



Denys Zhadanov

## 2018 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



Kateryna Akymenko Ruslan Baginskiy Zhan Beleniuk Anna Bondarenko Serhiy Breus Anastasia Deeva



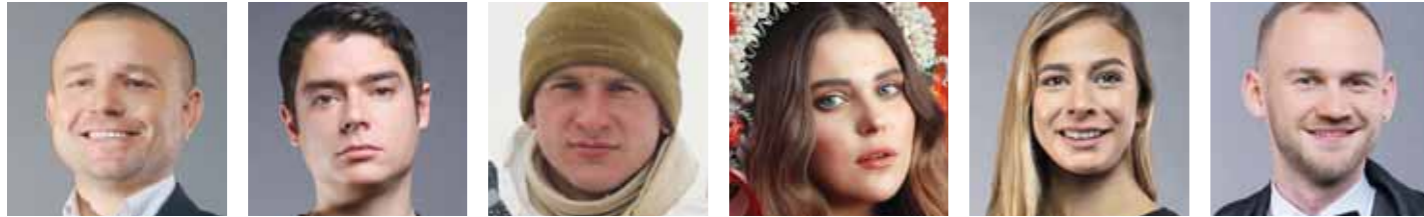
Yuriy Didula Vladyslav Greziev Olesia Kholopik Daria Korzhavina Ivona Kostyna Nadiia Kushnir



Myroslav Laiuk Sofia Lapina Oleksandr Lemenov Dariya Loseva Vladyslav Malashchenko Victoria Marchuk



Maiia Moskyvch Yuriy Pitchuk Taras Prokopyshyn Illia Razumeiko Kateryna Sadovaia Hlib Stryzhko



Yevgen Tryhub Vitaliy Ustymenko Andriy Verkhoglyad Oleksandra Zaritska Natalia Zharkova Oleksandr Zhuk

## 2019 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



Nariman Aliev Maria Artemenko Roman Bagayev Daria Bilodid Sofia Cheliak Oleksandr Cherkas



Oksana Drahan Yuriy Dvizhon Valeriya Egosyhna Mykhailo Fedorov Valentyn Frechka Ivan Frolov



Max Frolov Lesya Ivanova Olga Kharasakhal Viktoriya Luchka Kateryna Lykholiad Pavlo Medyna



Kateryna Mykhalko Roman Nabozhnyak Anna Novosad Zoya Ovsyi Alina Pash Maksym Petruk



Alyona Savranenko Iryna Shyba Natalka Sosnytska Maksym Studilko Lidiya Terpel Oleksandr Zinchenko

# VALERII ANANYEV

## War veteran talks army, Russia's war in Ukraine in his book, video blog

Former military officer Valerii Ananyev published his first book — a novel called “Traces on the Road” — at his own expense in 2018. It took just about a year and a half for all of the book's 28,000 copies to sell out.

Ananyev says that the fictional plot is based on a true story about Russia's war in Ukraine. Many readers say that it reads like an autobiography.

The story depicts the development of a military officer going through changes in his life. Ananyev always emphasizes that his book isn't about the war, but rather the “people in the war.”

Ananyev dreamt of becoming a military officer when he was a kid. When he turned 18, he went to the military commissariat to be hired as a paratrooper. For the next five years, from 2011 to 2016, he served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Once Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, he went to the Donbas to defend the nation and started shooting videos on YouTube to show all sides of the war and the Ukrainian army. He admits, though, that partly he just wanted to talk publicly about his life.

“The Ukrainian army at that time wasn't very far from the Soviet army in the way it was managed,” Ananyev says. “And this is such a closed (community) that it differs even from what happens in Ukraine.”

He helped attract attention to supply problems and other issues at the war front. He got booted out of the military three times due to his disclosures. But his troop commander took Ananyev back over and over again.

He embedded many of the videos and photos he shot into the pages of his book through QR codes. They help readers to feel more involved in the plot, Ananyev thinks.

In 2016, Ananyev left military service due to health issues. Returning to civilian life, he faced challenges with rehabilitation. As many other war veterans, he suffered from mental and physical strains.

After treatment in hospitals, he finished writing his book and decided to walk El Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) — a pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. This was his first trip abroad. He hiked about 1,800 kilometers from Paris to the Spanish Cape Finisterre and shot a 14-episode series about his trip.

He also traveled to dozens of places and countries, including Norway, the subject of his next book. Ananyev says that his trips calmed him down.

Now he runs his YouTube blog as an educational project.

“I think that our society is very primitive,” Ananyev says. Many people are intolerant, don't think much and don't have strong character.”

They need leaders, in his view.

He wants to change the situation and broaden the horizons of Ukrainians. Now he shoots videos about politics, history and everyday life.

— By Liza Semko. [semko@kyivpost.com](mailto:semko@kyivpost.com)

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TOP 30  
UNDER 30

Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 27

**Education:** No higher education

**Profession:** War veteran, traveler, writer and YouTube blogger

**Did you know?**

Ananyev isn't his true surname. He chose it after Russia-backed militants put a price on his head. He isn't disclosing his real name, fearing for the safety of his relatives.

# ANASTASIA APETYK

## Lawyer teaches digital rights to kids and police

Ukraine has a long way to go in protecting personal information and educating people about digital security.

Lawyer Anastasiia Apetyk is working to change that, teaching Ukrainian judges, police officers and children about the importance of digital security and data protection.

“We don’t have an established culture of respect for privacy and for personal data protection,” Apetyk told the Kyiv Post. “That’s why we are trying to popularize this subject.”

Apetyk began her career as an intern in the Ombudsman’s Office, specifically, the department of personal information protection, which shaped her future career. Today, Apetyk is one of the pioneers in digital security and data protection.

Ukrainian legislation is far behind much of the world in cybersecurity and protecting children’s rights online. For example, there are too few options to protect a minor from inappropriate or even illegal information online, says Apetyk.

“To this day, there are zero court rulings on banning illegal content online,” she says.

Apetyk has created the first course on digital rights and security for children, teaching kids about the importance of strong passwords, two-factor identification and what should and should not be shared online.

“We explain what digital rights are, why privacy is important, why protecting your personal information is important, banking information, emails, passwords, photos and so on,” says Apetyk.

According to Apetyk, almost all personal information stored online can be bought.

“Unfortunately, selling (databases with) personal information is widespread,” says Apetyk. “We see that databases involving personal information from banks, police and so on are often leaked.”

Ukraine lacks a data protection system in government. We often don’t know who collects our personal information, for what reasons and who might access it in the future, says Apetyk.

Previously, Apetyk made an effort to change the system from within, having spent most of her career representing the police in court and teaching law enforcement about digital rights.

“I initiated a workshop for police about digital rights and data protection,” says Apetyk. “There were multiple cases when police officers didn’t understand the topic and we taught them about digital rights so that they don’t violate them in the future.”

Apetyk remains positive about Ukraine’s future. She points out that Ukraine’s legislation is gradually becoming compatible with the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulations.

However, she adds that Ukraine “catastrophically” lacks specialists and teachers on the subject.

“When I started my master’s degree, in 2015, it was the first year we had a course on digital security,” says Apetyk.

— By Oleksiy Sorokin. [sorokin@kyivpost.com](mailto:sorokin@kyivpost.com)

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UNDER 30

**Age:** 26

**Education:** Master of Law from Lviv State University of Internal Affairs

**Profession:** Lawyer

**Did You Know:** She enjoys playing tennis.



Kostyantyn Chernichkin

# KYRYLO BESKOROVAYNY

## Media founder promotes science in Ukraine

Kyrylo Beskorovayny does what he can to make science popular in Ukraine. His best tool is pop-science magazine Kunsht, which he co-founded.

After magazines National Geographic and Esquire stopped circulating in Ukraine in 2015, 20-year-old Beskorovayny and his friend Angelina Beznesyuk decided to fill the empty niche.

And it's worked out. The 100-page magazine has written about space tourism, the human brain, time, the future of money and so on. The first and the second issues had a circulation of 1,000 copies, later scaled up to 2,000 copies. Nine print editions were published.

Many scientists supported the team and even started to write articles or provide expert commentary. The global aim is to teach people how to think critically, according to Beskorovayny. He dreams that people will start to read Kunsht at least once a week and will start to discuss science as they do politics or economics.

However, printing a magazine proved to be so costly that, in the spring of 2019, they launched the website kunsht.com.ua and switched completely online.

The Kunsht team has rolled out other projects, including exhibitions, educational videos shown in Ukrainian trains and the metro, columns in Ukraine International Airlines' magazine, Panorama, programs at the Annual Publishers' Forum and podcasts.

"We had an idea to make science accessible. Where's most of the people? They are in the subway, intercity trains and planes," Beskorovayny says. "They travel, have a lot of time."

Besides, he says, public transport in Ukraine often lacks the internet.

"People are bored — let's fill this time with science," Beskorovayny says.

In 2020, at 25, Beskorovayny published his first book "My Female Friend From the Dark Matter." It is about a boy from a family of astrophysicists who tries to get to know more about the universe. Although the publishing house marks it as a children's book, Beskorovayny says that it's "for all generations."

Beskorovayny says that his love for science — especially chemistry — started in school. He studied at a Chernihiv school that specialized in foreign languages. Being good at English, he participated in academic competitions and won awards.

But chemistry was his true love. To impress his chemistry teacher, Beskorovayny learned by heart half of the periodic table of elements. Later, he won the chance to study in the U.S. on the FLEX high school exchange program for one year, choosing chemistry as one of his subjects. That led him ultimately to Kunsht.

Still, despite his interest in chemistry, he chose international information as his university specialty. There he met soulmates who became co-founders of Kunsht.

"The most important thing in higher education isn't even knowledge — because knowledge can be gained in online courses — it's the community," Beskorovayny says.

— By Liza Semko. [semko@kyivpost.com](mailto:semko@kyivpost.com)

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TOP 30  
UNDER 30

Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 25

**Education:** International information, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

**Profession:** Cofounder of pop-science media Kunsht

**Did you know?** Beskorovayny was a FLEX exchange student in the U.S. for one year. He also was a youth delegate from Ukraine to the United Nations.



# YEVHEN BOHODAIKO

## Swimming to Paralympic gold

Yevhen Bohodaiko's right arm matured only down to his elbow. His left hand is missing two fingers.

That put him at a disadvantage at sports, but it didn't stop him. The young boy was fond of soccer and martial arts.

Then, at the age of 11, he was invited to try swimming in a pool supervised by coaches working with disabled children.

At first, he wasn't really good at swimming and the coaches suggested that he would be better off exploring other sports. But Yevhen grew so fond of swimming that, at one point, he couldn't imagine his life without it.

His early scores at competitions were not too impressive. But then he got a break: In 2009, one of the swimmers with Ukraine's team for a European championship in Iceland was disqualified and Bohodaiko was invited to replace him.

In this championship, Bohodaiko, then 14, won two medals — a surprise even for him.

He's always had a dream of reaching the achievements of his sports idol, legendary U.S. swimmer Michael Phelps, who won eight medals in one Olympics.

Incredibly, in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Bohodaiko claimed nine medals — including in the back stroke, which was his weak spot.

"That was just something beyond reality," he says. "Even now, years later, I can't believe that actually happened."

He became a superstar of Ukrainian para-athletics and one of the country's most-awarded swimmers.

That was the result of tremendously hard work — Bohodaiko normally has two or three-hour training sessions daily when preparing for a competition.

As of today, he has won six gold, five silver and two bronze medals.

And he is looking forward to going to the next Paralympics, which is set to take place in Tokyo in 2021. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the competition in the Japanese capital, along with the main Olympics, was postponed from its original date in 2020.

But after Tokyo, Bohodaiko plans to end his sports career.

He decided that he will devote his life to entrepreneurship. He is already running a small company in Poltava producing plastic bottles and recycling raw materials.

"One needs to always be looking forward, keep smiling and work really hard," he says. "Many people believe that success must necessarily fall from the sky into their hands, just like that. This is not the case. Anyone can have success in a certain field if he or she is devoted to this thing. I am absolutely sure that any hard work bears fruit."

— By Illia Ponomarenko. [ponomarenko@kyivpost.com](mailto:ponomarenko@kyivpost.com)

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Courtesy of National Paralympic Committee of Ukraine



**Age:** 26

**Education:** Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University

**Profession:** Paralympic Games swimming champion

**Did you know?** As a child, he was so obsessed with swimming that he would sometimes skip his school classes to train more in the pool.

# LILIYA BOROVETS

## Nonprofit founder fights to innovate local education system

The two most difficult problems of the Ukrainian education system are inflexibility and rejection of progressive teaching methods. Liliya Borovets is fighting to change that.

Born and raised in Velyki Mosty, a town of 6,000 people in Lviv Oblast, Borovets got a precious gift from her parents — the desire to study.

Although it was economically hard for many families in Ukraine during the 1990s, her parents prioritized education. When she was in high school, they would even send her to international camps in Poland and Sweden, which gave her a broader perspective.

“My father always told me, ‘People can take away everything from you except your education,’” says Borovets. “I grew up with an inner feeling that education would help me in life.”

After graduating from Lviv University, Borovets and her two friends created the Pro.Svit center in 2016 to help improve the way Ukraine’s education system works — from introducing innovative programs for Ukrainian teachers and principals to making schools work better.

Their brave step was fueled by feedback collected during a previous educational project on providing courses for teenagers in Lviv on how to foster teamwork, recognize talent and leadership.

“Teachers realized that there are other ways of working with students and it is possible to teach children not only by giving them direct orders, but to communicate more, create teams and space for new ideas,” says Borovets.

Four years after they launched Pro.Svit, 3,200 principals, teachers and students from 105 schools have participated in various programs and projects initiated by the nonprofit.

Over 300 of the projects have been crowdfunded through the organization’s GoFundEd platform — 4,500 donors have raised \$140,000 for projects and ideas proposed by teachers and students.

Borovets’s favorite one is called Compola, a campaign to encourage students and schools to compost food waste from school kitchens.

The idea was proposed by a 12-year-old boy and girl from one of Kyiv’s schools. The idea was to install special containers with worms that turn waste into plant-friendly fertilizers. The Ministry of Education has supported the idea and installed the containers in 200 more schools across the country.

Borovets sees that many people are willing to support innovative approaches. But one thing makes her sad still — often teachers who go through Pro.Svit programs face resistance from their peers.

“Changes are very often not welcome in schools,” says Borovets. “School administrations don’t like new initiatives.”

She is working to change that. “We want schools to become organizations that constantly learn and develop,” says Borovets.

— By Natalia Datskevych. [datskevych@kyivpost.com](mailto:datskevych@kyivpost.com)

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Courtesy of Lilia Borovets



**Age:** 27

**Education:** Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

**Profession:** Lawyer and co-founder of an education center for teachers and schools

**Did you know?** She loves hiking in the mountains. The most unusual place where she hiked was Volcano Teide on Tenerife in the Canary Islands.

# ANNA CHERNYAVSKA

## School teacher fights bullying nationwide

In Ukraine, one in every three children has faced bullying in school or online, according to Anna Chernyavska, a middle school teacher from a city of just over 20,000 residents.

In July 2020, Chernyavska co-founded an anti-bullying non-governmental organization called Ne Tskui (Don't Bully) to help stop bullying and provide children with the support they require.

"We're among the first anti-bullying organizations in Ukraine," Chernyavska told the Kyiv Post.

Chernyavska's decision to become a teacher came unexpectedly from a boring classroom.

"Studying in school, I always wanted to change the education system, because I had extremely boring classes which featured only a pen, a notebook and a textbook," says Chernyavska. "I dreamed of becoming a teacher open to innovations."

Chernyavska's dream came true, yet the path wasn't easy.

After graduating from Dnipropetrovsk National University, Chernyavska moved to Vilnohirsk, a city in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, to start her teaching career.

Suddenly, she faced strong opposition from colleagues who didn't see Chernyavska's style as well-suited for the local school. For those teachers, Chernyavska's decision to introduce VR, Instagram and other modern platforms to make learning fun for her students was alien.

Chernyavska says that her colleagues didn't understand how Instagram quizzes and 3D pictures can help her students with their grades. Conflicts were common.

Everything changed with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and Zoom classes.

Chernyavska's modern teaching style, with her frequent use of social media and online apps, proved useful at keeping students engaged in the process of learning while staying at home.

The attitude towards her teaching methods began to change among her colleagues, who are now seeking Chernyavska's help.

"Now, my colleagues are holding Zoom classes, online study sessions and are even more open towards Instagram," she says.

Chernyavska's personal experience when she began her teaching career and the widespread problem of bullying in schools and online prompted her and schoolteacher Oleksandr Cherkas, a Kyiv Post 2019 Top 30 Under 30 winner, to found Ne Tskui.

The organization allows kids to file a complaint about attacks from peers, helps children understand their strengths and provides support to those in crisis.

The organization focuses on bullies as well.

"They are also victims," says Chernyavska, adding that they need help to overcome the problems that may have caused their aggressive behavior towards others.

The organization also supports teachers who are working in hostile environments.

"We had a situation where a teacher was bullied by children. We talked to her every day, helping her to stay in the profession," says Chernyavska.

— By *Oleksiy Sorokin*. [sorokin@kyivpost.com](mailto:sorokin@kyivpost.com)

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TOP 30  
UNDER 30

Courtesy of Anna Chernyavska



**Age:** 26

**Education:** Philology, Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University

**Profession:** Ukrainian language and literature teacher

**Did you know?** She was added to the Global Teachers Prize Ukraine Top 50 list.

# HALYNA CHYZHYK

## Young lawyer and activist fights corruption in seeking to reform Ukraine's judicial system

Halyna Chyzhyk, 28, is an ambitious lawyer and anti-corruption activist. She has dedicated the last five years of her life to combating and preventing corruption in Ukraine's judicial system.

In 2019, Chyzhyk joined the Anti-Corruption Action Center, a non-profit which works to expose corruption in Ukraine. There, she is responsible for judicial reform. Her main goal is overhauling the procedures for forming judicial bodies that appoint and dismiss judges.

"This is a daunting task, as control of the judiciary is concentrated in the hands of various judicial clans, and it is advantageous for both them and the political authorities who use their services to maintain the status quo," Chyzhyk told the Kyiv Post.

In 2016, she and her colleagues from Chesno, a corruption watchdog, launched a monitoring campaign called "Chesno. Filter the court!" The team has been monitoring the background and activities of judges to determine their integrity. That year, Chyzhyk also became a member, and eventually a coordinator of the Public Integrity Council — a body composed of public experts that checks judges and candidates for compliance with

the criteria of integrity and professional ethics.

"For me, the council, which I coordinated for two years, is a testament to the fact that civil society can come together and work effectively to achieve a common goal in the most difficult conditions, without resources and support, sacrificing time, money and even health," Chyzhyk said.

In 2018–2019, she advised international experts who participated in the selection of judges of the High Anti-Corruption Court. The experts had the right to veto unscrupulous candidates, and they managed to veto almost 85% of dubious candidates in the competition.

Chyzhyk believes that, unfortunately, the Ukrainian judiciary hasn't changed much since the EuroMaidan Revolution that overthrew Kremlin-backed President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014. But she is confident that involving independent experts from the public will help break the vicious circle in which judges themselves elect who will dismiss and appoint them.

— By Anastasiia Lapatina. [lapatina@kyivpost.com](mailto:lapatina@kyivpost.com)

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 28

**Education:** Masters from Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, The Criminal Justice and Prosecutors' Training Institute

**Profession:** Lawyer

**Did you know?** When judicial reform in Ukraine eventually becomes a success story, she is hoping to work on a project related to ecology.

# TIMUR FATKULLIN

## Aerobatic pilot maneuvers life into world championship

When Timur Fatkullin saw an aerobatic plane for the first time, the scene was so magnetic, it was better than the movies, he says. At the age of 11, he was participating in a rock-climbing contest in his native Crimea when he noticed an aircraft gliding between the mountains.

“Who is this person sitting inside?” Fatkullin asked himself.

In the years to come, not only would he meet that exact pilot, who turned out to be a teacher of Fatkullin’s future instructor, but also learn how to fly himself.

Fatkullin’s hometown of Chornomorske didn’t even have a runway. In Sevastopol city, where he moved to study economics at the age of 16, pilot lessons were too costly. So his dream was put on hold until Fatkullin traveled in the United States as a student and visited local aerodromes.

“Aviation is way more accessible there. Many young people fly,” he says.

The experience reignited his interest and, upon his return to Ukraine, Fatkullin enrolled in a private pilot school in Kyiv. After hours of theory and training, he was finally holding a control wheel for the first time.

“The level of freedom and fun is so high,” he says. “The whole space is yours.”

He planned to fly between Kyiv and Crimea, but Russia’s occupation of the peninsula since 2014 ruined his plans. Eager to continue flying, Fatkullin stayed in Kyiv and shifted to aerobatics, quickly mastering some of the most complex maneuvers.

At his first contest, Ukraine’s aerobatics championship in 2017, Fatkullin won silver in the intermediate category. A year later, he was second again in the higher advanced category.

In 2019, Fatkullin, along with his three-member team, represented Ukraine at the World Intermediate Aerobatic Championship in the Czech Republic. In one of the programs called “free unknown,” where a pilot has to perform a set of given maneuvers without preparation, Fatkullin dared to make an unconventional move. He started with one of the hardest maneuvers, flying upside down, and performed remarkably, which won him the title of world champion. In the overall table, Fatkullin scored fourth, while his team won the gold.

After his impressive performance, Fatkullin became the first Ukrainian invited to participate in the Red Bull Air Race World Championship, one of the most influential and spectacular aerobatic events. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the contest has been delayed. Still, in 2020, he wasted no time and topped up his qualifications, becoming a licensed instructor and giving private lessons.

Aerobatic pilots get little if any state funding in Ukraine. Equipment and contest fees are often financed by sponsors. The local pilot community mostly consists of older people who can afford the hobby. But Fatkullin dreams of making the sport more accessible and popular. He started by promoting it through Instagram with breathtaking videos of him flying around picturesque Ukraine. Later, he wants to launch his own school, so that other young Ukrainians dreaming of soaring the skies don’t have to struggle with funding but focus on sports. “An athlete has to be an athlete,” he says.

— By Toma Istomina. [istomina@kyivpost.com](mailto:istomina@kyivpost.com)

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 27

**Education:** Economics and management, Sevastopol National Technical University

**Profession:** Aerobatic pilot, financier

**Did you know?** At the age of 14, he was given an award by a Swedish princess in an international contest for constructing a water desalination device.

# VALERIYA GUZEMA

## Self-made jewelry designer inspires female entrepreneurs, supports charity

Valeriya Guzema had a long and thorny path on the way to establishing her own jewelry brand. When she finally saved up enough money and created her first collection, the precious pieces got stolen.

But Guzema did not give up. Now, over four years later, Guzema Fine Jewelry is among the best-known brands in Ukraine and a holder of two Elle Style Awards.

Ukrainian celebrities such as the winner of the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest Jamala, TV host Kateryna Osadcha and pop singer NK are among the brand's fans, along with Canadian-American actress Kim Cattrall, who was spotted wearing golden rings from Guzema.

In 2019, Guzema added another celebrity to her customer list when she designed earrings for Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska that she wore for the inauguration of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"I had no expectations, but I was sincerely doing what I really loved," Guzema told the Kyiv Post.

Guzema grew up in Chernihiv, a city of 280,000 people some 140 kilometers northeast of Kyiv, but moved to the capital to study philology and later journalism.

Guzema has always been passionate about fashion. Before establishing her brand, she worked for Elle Ukraine magazine and HD Fashion TV channel.

But nothing excited her more than jewelry, so, in 2015, she decided to get into the business. At the time, she had only \$500 in savings, a ridiculously inadequate sum. The start-up capital came from an unexpected source. Guzema's mother gave her golden dental

crowns that belonged to her grandfather. After selling them, Guzema had enough to create her first pieces.

Even though the first collection was stolen, she kept her spirits up. In March 2016, she founded Guzema Fine Jewelry. Since then, Guzema has created nearly 19 collections and opened a store in Kyiv.

Guzema designs all the jewelry herself. Minimalist, chic and stylish, the pieces are made to emphasize a woman's beauty, but not overshadow it. The brand offers a variety of thin-band or massive rings with or without gems, earrings, embellished anklets, necklaces, chokers and more.

But helping others is also on her mind.

In 2017, she launched a charity project "Charity Chain" with Maria Yefrosinina, a television presenter and human rights advocate. Guzema created a necklace with five pendants on it, all adorned with words such as love, believe, pray, share and help. Each necklace costs \$475.

The money is donated to Tvoya Opora charitable foundation, which helps children with congenital heart conditions. The project has raised over \$140,000, paying the cost of vital surgeries for 71 children.

The designer also cooperates with the "I Can" project launched by the Olena Pinchuk Foundation, where she mentors aspiring female entrepreneurs.

Guzema has big dreams for her brand to enter the international market. But she plans to keep doing good in Ukraine.

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Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 29

**Education:** Philology, journalism, Taras Shevchenko National University

**Profession:** Founder of Guzema Fine Jewelry

**Did you know?** Despite her busy schedule, she makes time for learning French and attending piano and ballroom dancing classes.

# OLENA HERASYMYUK

## Poet, military medic documents Ukrainians killed by USSR

In Ukraine, history is never far away.

For Olena Herasymyuk, that past seems particularly close. The poet and former military medic spent five years documenting the stories of Ukrainians who perished in Soviet gulags, casting light on a chapter of Ukrainian history that many forget or choose to ignore.

Millions of Ukrainians died or suffered from political repressions under the Soviet Union. But the subject of death and suffering is “taboo in Ukrainian traditional culture,” Herasymyuk writes in the introduction to “Rozstrilny Kalendar” (“Execution Calendar”), her 2017 book. “And this problem is not restricted to history.”

Still, “Rozstrilny Kalendar” focuses on history, telling the story of these executed Ukrainians in the form of a calendar to show that “the Soviet repressive system never took a day off,” Herasymyuk says.

Coming from a long line of writers — her father and grandfather are poets — Herasymyuk always knew she wanted to do something related. She published her first book of poems, “Deafness,” in 2014.

But Herasymyuk was not content to stick purely to literature. She was also an activist. In this regard, she took after her grandfather, Mykhailo Datsiuk, a poet and Soviet-era dissident.

In 2014, Herasymyuk took part in a demonstration on Kyiv’s Independence Square in which she and others read the names of Ukrainians writers and intellectuals killed in Sandarmokh, a forest in northwest Russia in 1937–38, at the height of the Stalinist Terror. “A lot of people came,” Herasymyuk says.

It was also personal. Herasymyuk’s father was born in exile in Karaganda on the bleak northern steppes of Kazakhstan. Her great grandfather had been a commander in the Sich Riflemen, an Austro-Hungarian unit that briefly fought against Bolshevik forces in 1919.

“Rozstrilny Kalendar” began as a project on Facebook that published one or more stories of victims daily. In one year, Herasymyuk and her collaborators published 1,000 articles. A third of them made it into the book.

She also succeeded in helping to persuade a court to posthumously rehabilitate 13 people arrested and executed in 1923 for their opposition to Soviet authority.

Herasymyuk was touched to receive a message from a descendant of one of the rehabilitated men. “We never believed it would happen,” Herasymyuk says, quoting the woman’s words.

“Rozstrilny Kalendar” wasn’t the end for Herasymyuk. In 2017, she joined the Hospitaliers military medical battalion in the Donbas. There, in June 2019, she took part in a special operation to capture Volodymyr Tsemakh, a man who allegedly played a central role in the Russia-backed militants’ downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17. Several months later, Tsemakh was released to Russia as part of a prisoner exchange.

This year, Ukraine awarded her the medal “For Saving Lives.” She also published “Prison Song,” a book of lyrical poetry drawing from her experiences in the war, to great acclaim.

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Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 29

**Education:** Master of Philology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

**Profession:** Writer

**Did you know?** Her first “publication” was conversations with her grandfather, which he transcribed and published in a local Boryspil newspaper when she was a child.

# SASHKO HORONDI

## Formerly homeless entrepreneur creates own backpack brand

Sashko Horondi, founder of the Horondi backpack brand, says he did not choose to create backpacks. Rather, “the backpacks chose him.”

At the time, no one thought that this brand would be so successful. The road that brought Horondi into designing and selling his own backpacks and accessories started almost 30 years ago in his native Mukachevo, a city of 86,000 people located 770 kilometers south-west of Kyiv.

“At home, I was in a bad company,” he told the Kyiv Post.

At the age of 13, Horondi was part of a local gang initially involved in petty theft. He was caught by the police at 17, and was given a suspended sentence of two years for robbery.

“If you grow up on the streets in a certain criminal environment, you will not be able to leave it so easily,” he said. “At the time, it seemed to me that leaving home would be the only way out.”

That’s why Horondi decided to leave for Lviv, a city of 721,000 and the cultural capital of western Ukraine. “I got on the train and ran to Lviv, promising myself that I would never return and I’d be better off dying somewhere far away from everyone and all that. I didn’t even know if Lviv was a big city. It was just the end of the line.”

Horondi spent nights at the Lviv train station, rummaging in the dumpsters for something to eat. He tried to find items to sell. Still, even on the street, “I felt free,” he says.

Soon he found the Emmaus Home of Oselya in Lviv, part of an international charity that helps the homeless. He became the first resident of the Oselya social dormitory and learned to repair furniture. He served as administrator of the dorm for two years.

But it was not enough. He wanted to create something to enjoy, like sewing a backpack. “I did not succeed at first, and had no money to buy fabric, but I lived in a social dormitory, which had a shop where people gave them clothes they did not need. And from that I tried to sew something,” he said.

He sewed a few other items at the request of the head of Emmaüs Home, Olesya Sanotska, for a garage sale. “I sewed backpacks for that sale, and, in half an hour, I sold everything.”

He found his calling in life. He knows where the credit goes. Without the Emmaüs community, “neither I nor the Horondi brand would exist.”

The next step, he said, is to create Horondi goods for the home, as well as clothes and shoes too. Horondi also wants to create another Emmaüs Home somewhere. “I feel a responsibility to the people who live on the streets and are now in trouble. The least I can do is give those people a fishing rod and teach them to fish, as the saying goes,” he said.

Another saying sums up Horondi’s philosophy: “The most important thing is to dream, to travel, to love and to try to bring as little evil as possible to this world and other people’s lives. You reap what you sow,” he said.

— By Alexander Query. [query@kyivpost.com](mailto:query@kyivpost.com)

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 29

**Education:** Trained as a carpenter

**Profession:** Entrepreneur

**Did you know?:** He learned his skills thanks to Emmaüs, an international charity community, in Lviv.



# ALISA KOLPAKCHY

## Paratriathlon athlete rocked in Brazil in 2016, now aims for winning a medal in Japan in 2021

Alisa Kolpakchy didn't find her path to the Paralympics easily. For four years, she was trying different sports, looking for the one that would motivate her to keep going as a professional athlete.

She first tried swimming, then moved to track-and-field athletics. Both were not what she was looking for. When she turned 18, someone suggested paratriathlon and Kolpakchy agreed to give it a try.

She immediately loved it and soon started achieving impressive results.

Kolpakchy started as a paratriathlon athlete in 2015 and was so promising that her coaches began preparing her to join the national team at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

She performed well in her first international championships, but her scores still weren't enough for Kolpakchy to make it to the top 10 in the world's ranking. She was 11th, hence not eligible for the Paralympics.

"I accepted this as it was, but, of course, the Paralympics was such a dream, and for some reason, I believed that I should be there in Rio," Kolpakchy told the Kyiv Post.

Then the World Anti-Doping Agency accused Russian officials of covering up the massive use of drugs and blood doping among track-and-field athletes. Russia was banned from participating in both the Olympics and Paralympics in 2016.

This opened the doors for Kolpakchy.

"At first I didn't believe it. I was happy, of course, to see that dreams come true. I really wanted to take part in that year's Paralympics," she said. "For an athlete, it's a proof that you achieved something."

Kolpakchy finished sixth, a result she takes pride in. The new goal, however, is to win a medal at the next Paralympics in Tokyo, Japan.

Scheduled to be held in 2020, Paralympics was eventually postponed to 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. This didn't disappoint Kolpakchy.

"You have another year for preparation to become stronger, better, faster," she said.

Paratriathlon changed her life, making her more confident.

"In 2016, I stopped wearing the prosthesis entirely. But before, it was very difficult. I used to feel uncomfortable, even with friends, but not anymore," she said. "I accept myself and this makes others accept me."

The Kyiv native is in her last year as an architecture student. After graduation, she wants to do fine arts, but only as a hobby. Her main passion remains sports.

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Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 23

**Education:** Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture

**Profession:** architect and paratriathlon athlete

**Did you know?** She loves meditating and once gave up speaking and using her phone for three days in a row.

# ARTYOM KOPANEV

## Young executive teaches Parkinson's disease patients to dance

Artyom Kopanev began ballroom dancing when he was 4 because “girls needed partners” in his kindergarten. Little did he know that ballroom dancing would become such a big part of his life for the 20 next years.

At 17, Kopanev started developing a dancing program to help people with Parkinson's disease, a brain disorder that leads to shaking, stiffness, and difficulty with walking, balance, and coordination.

He started working on it accidentally — a friend of his, a prominent specialist in treating the disease in the eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk, where Kopanev is from, asked to help her. She heard about a program in England of a dance therapy to fight Parkinson's and thought that Kopanev and she could do the same.

“She said she knew I was engaged in ballroom choreography and Latin dancing. That's how it began,” Kopanev said.

Parkinson's degenerative symptoms usually unfold gradually and get worse over time, but dancing helps patients to get some of their coordination back. “Patients felt better and enjoyed dance therapy so we decided to continue as people started to move faster, had better balance and felt happier,” Kopanev said.

The program was a success, but in 2014, Russia started its war in eastern Ukraine, and Kopanev had to start his life over in Kyiv on his own. “It was quite hard to settle in Kyiv because I was only 18 years old, and alone,” he said.

He was working a low-paid job, teaching children how to dance at summer camps and applying for any others

jobs he thought he could do. “I needed money to start a new life,” he said.

The new life led him to become a deputy chief operating officer at tech firm Genesis, a senior executive tasked with overseeing the day-to-day administrative and operational functions of one of the largest IT companies in Ukraine. Passion is key, he says.

“A team leader only focused on results cannot hire the best talent, if you don't have passion to develop people's talent, they will not work with you for long,” he says.

He got this job thanks to mathematics and logic skills, he said. He developed these skills through an internship at Ernst & Young in transaction adviser services.

“I understood that was the field where I could use my skills in the best way,” he said, “which also allowed me to continue the dancing program.”

He found out that his friend moved to Kyiv too. She contacted him from an institute of gerontology where she was studying Parkinson's disease patients and wanted to replicate the same program. Kopanev agreed.

Being an executive and a volunteer is complementary, Kopanev said. “When you are volunteering, people are happy to see you, even when you're not efficient. It's not about money — they're just happy you exist and this program is there,” he said.

“At the end, it is about getting the right things (in life) done.”

— By Alexander Query. [query@kyivpost.com](mailto:query@kyivpost.com)

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 24

**Education:** Kyiv National Economic University

**Profession:** Deputy chief operating officer at Genesis, one of the largest IT companies in Ukraine

**Did you know?** He began ballroom dancing when he was 4.

# ROMAN KRAVETS

## Political reporter interviews Ukraine's top figures, becomes one of most recognizable journalists

Roman Kravets has interviewed most of the Ukrainian establishment as a political reporter for *Ukrainska Pravda*, one of the country's most trusted and respected media.

Where other journalists struggle to get a hold of top officials and behind-the-scenes players, he finds a way to get exclusives. "Over the last two years, I have interviewed all the key people in our country," Kravets says.

His persistence helped him get where he is. But long before embarking on the journalism path, Kravets dreamed of becoming a priest.

He was born and raised in Ivano-Frankivsk, a city of 230,000 people in western Ukraine with nearly 60 churches and cathedrals. Growing up in a religious community, he decided to enter a theological seminary. The studies bored Kravets. But soon he found an activity that sparked his curiosity — writing news stories for the seminary's website.

"I was interested in writing articles, learning something new and sharing it with the world," he says.

Things started to get serious when Kravets asked the chief editor of a local newspaper to help him improve his writing. During his sophomore year, he quit the seminary and pursued journalism.

His first internship was at *Ukrainska Pravda*, which he earned by writing op-eds. After two internships there, Kravets was finally offered a position as a reporter. He worked tirelessly, spending much of his time covering the Ukrainian parliament.

"I went to all the fights, rallies, court hearings," Kravets says.

"Everyone knew me because I showed up everywhere."

Back then, Kravets made connections that became useful when he shifted to in-depth stories.

One highlight was when he became one of the first journalists to interview Volodymyr Zelensky after he announced he was running for president in 2019. Kravets says he had been watching the possible candidate closely and predicted the move.

Their conversation was published on YouTube, collecting over 1.2 million views and making headlines in all Ukrainian media. In 2020, Kravets interviewed Zelensky again. It was one of just a couple of interviews the president gave to Ukrainian media.

Another interview that Kravets takes pride in was with notorious billionaire oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. He was one of the first journalists to question Kolomoisky upon his return to Ukraine after two years of self-imposed exile in 2019.

Though interviewing top figures can be intimidating, Kravets is not afraid. He prepares thoroughly.

His popular video interviews broadened the audience of *Ukrainska Pravda*, while he became a rare example of a widely recognizable journalist who is not on TV.

Kravets believes his theological background helps him: Rather than judging people, he let's them share first.

"My main strength is not writing stories, but that I know how to listen to people and ask them appropriate questions."

— By Yana Mokhonchuk. [yanamokhonchuk@gmail.com](mailto:yanamokhonchuk@gmail.com)

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Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 28

**Education:** Journalism, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

**Profession:** Political journalist

**Did you know?** President Volodymyr Zelensky half-jokingly offered him a position in his administration.

# YULIYA LEVCHENKO

## Star athlete conquers international competitions

Yuliya Levchenko is one of the most promising athletes in Ukraine.

She achieved her first big victory at 16 when she won a golden medal in high jumps at the Youth Olympic Games. Just three years later, Levchenko was among top adult athletes when she won silver at the 2017 World Championship.

Levchenko was reportedly born in Bakhmut, a city in Donetsk Oblast. As a child, she was drawn to many occupations, including journalism, medicine and law. But there was nothing she enjoyed more than physical training.

Levchenko's gym teacher noticed her natural talent and signed her up for athletics classes when she was 13.

After only a week of training, much to everyone's surprise, she managed to win an athletics competition in Kyiv.

After her victorious performance at the 2014 Youth Olympic Games in China, Levchenko continued to gain momentum. In the following years, she won bronze at the 2016 U20 World Athletics Championship and another bronze at the 2017 European Indoor Athletics Championship.

Her silver medal at the 2017 World Championship was a big sensation. There, Levchenko set her personal record with a 2.01-meter result. The current record among women is 2.09 meters.

After that, the athlete continued to collect prizes including the gold at the 2018 European Team Championships.

Her road to success was complicated by injuries. Levchenko broke her big toe twice at 15. The period was so difficult, she even thought about quitting sport.

"You're just getting in shape, just starting to show (high) results, and then everything falls apart," she told the 1+1 TV channel. "I was thinking maybe I'm not meant for it, maybe it's a sign."

But Levchenko didn't give up. Today she spends up to three hours a day in the gym, five days a week.

And her hard work paid off: The athlete now ranks third in the women's high jump rating, according to the World Athletics platform. But she says there's no reason to relax, as the competition among Ukrainian athletes is fierce, pushing her to continue getting better.

"Competition motivates, it constantly keeps you in shape," she said in an interview with Red Bull.

But while she aims to reach goals, Levchenko doesn't lose sleep over worrying about results. Instead, she's simply enjoying the moment, and that's her success formula, she says.

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**Age:** 22

**Education:** National University of Physical Education and Sports

**Profession:** High jump athlete

**Did you know?** She has a ritual of stepping from the bed with her left leg in the morning, as that's the leg she pushes from when high jumping.

# ANTONIO LUKIĆ

## Director debuts with insightful hit comedy with more to come

With his feature film debut, writer-director Antonio Lukić made something of a phenomenon in Ukrainian cinema — a profitable comedy loved both by the general public and more sophisticated viewers.

“My Thoughts Are Silent” premiered in 2019, winning awards at film festivals in Karlovy Vary, Odesa and Minsk. Lukić thought it was the peak of success for his rather auteur film.

But then came the wide release in 2020. With a budget of Hr 9.2 million (\$324,000), the film made over Hr 10 million (\$353,000) in Ukraine, becoming one of the few profitable Ukrainian movies.

Comedies are in demand in war-torn Ukraine, but it’s not the main reason for the success of “My Thoughts...” Through humor, it told an appealing story about a struggling freelancer who dreams to emigrate from Ukraine, but not before reconnecting with his estranged mother.

“In a lighter form, I try to reach serious subjects,” Lukić told the Kyiv Post. “We didn’t make it to please anyone, but only to surprise.”

And it worked. Without much advertising, twice as many viewers came to see the film in its second week in cinemas than in the first. People simply told each other to go watch it.

Over those weeks, Lukić became a sought-after director in Ukraine. Many offers followed to shoot and give

talks about directing, and famous people started to approach him. He even received the state title of an “honored artist.” But these perks quickly get tiresome, Lukić says.

“I’m still the same nobody when I go settle the utility bills,” he says. And adds jokingly: “No, I now actually always ask to serve salmon on the film set.”

Besides the odd jobs shooting commercials, Lukić doesn’t shy away from directing TV series on someone else’s script. The most recent one is “Sex, Insta and ZNO” — a modern drama about a teenage girl struggling with her sexuality in the digital age, and that accursed out-of-school exam.

“The series’ screenplay resonated with me, and it became a platform for realizing my ideas and exercises in comedy and other things,” he says.

But the top priority for Lukić is his next film “Luxembourg, Luxembourg” about Ukrainian twin brothers on a trip to meet their father in the European micro-state. Lukić returns to his family themes: While “My Thoughts...” is a tribute to his mother, the upcoming film is a reflection on his father.

“When you want to recreate a time that is gone or revive a person who’s not with you — you go and do it in film,” Lukić says.

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 28

**Education:** Directing, Ivan Karpenko-Karyi National University of Theater, Film and Television

**Profession:** Film director

**Did you know?** He is a pizza buff and dreams of running his own pizza place. He says his brain is divided into four sections: control functions, soccer, cinema and the largest — pizza.

# ANASTASIA MAKARENKO

## Civic activist promotes cycling, longs to make it safer in Ukraine

Anastasia Makarenko loves books and bicycles, so she became an activist to share her passions with others and make the world a better place.

In January 2014, Makarenko joined the EuroMaidan Revolution, which ousted ex-President Viktor Yanukovich, to spread education among others.

Amid the escalating protests, she donated books to a library opened by activists in Ukrainian House, an exhibition center in central Kyiv, right where the revolution was unfolding.

Makarenko couldn't leave the library once she visited it and stayed there until summer. She invited famous Ukrainian writers like Vasyl Shkliar and Yuriy Andrukhovych to read lectures and encouraged local publishing houses to donate their books.

While Kyiv's Khreshchatyk Street was covered with dust and smoke, the library was like a small island, open to all.

"It wasn't just about books, but about the community," Makarenko says.

After the revolution, Makarenko was inspired to continue working in a civic sector — unlike transportation engineering, the specialty she learned at the university, social work fulfilled Makarenko with joy.

She joined Ukraine's nonprofit U-Cycle in 2014 and became the head of the organization four years later. Founded in 2004, U-Cycle promotes safe cycling and supports bicycle-friendly facilities in Ukraine, which the country still lacks.

As an avid cyclist, Makarenko knows that getting around Ukraine on a bike can be a hassle — Ukrainian traffic regulations for cyclists are flawed and many cities have no cycling lanes whatsoever.

"Ukraine is a marvelous country but you should always step out of your comfort zone to explore it," Makarenko said.

U-Cycle has set out to change that.

The hardest part, Makarenko recalled, was to convince the media and local governments that U-Cycle is a community of change-makers — not just a group of cycling buffs.

The further they went, the more they achieved. In 2018, U-Cycle made local governments in Ukraine to reduce traffic speed in cities from 60 to 50 kilometers per hour and to adopt national standards helping to build bike-friendly cities.

Makarenko said that Ukraine needs a developed infrastructure for bicycles so people could make better life-style choices.

"When you are getting around the city on bicycle, you improve the quality of life," Makarenko said. The air becomes cleaner, the cities quieter and the streets more spacious, she adds.

For a dedicated activist like Makarenko, making the world a better place is crucial.

"People talk about climate change and social justice — these are vague concepts. Cycling, however, is a more specific way to make a change," she says.

— By Daryna Antoniuk. [antoniuk@kyivpost.com](mailto:antoniuk@kyivpost.com)

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Kostyantyn Chernichkin



**Age:** 29

**Education:** Master's degree in nonprofit management at Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv

**Profession:** Head of nonprofit U-Cycle

**Did you know?**

To restore inner balance, she went on a spontaneous solo trip to India, just a month before she was to graduate from her university.

# ROMAN MOGYLNYI

## Ukrainian techie creates mobile app used by Elon Mask, Snoop Dogg

Ukrainian tech entrepreneur Roman Mogylnyi and two of his friends — Oles Petriv and Yaroslav Boiko — developed a technology that blurs the distinction between fiction and reality. Called Reface, it allows users to try on faces of celebrities in videos and make them look like their own.

The app has gone viral worldwide: Over 60 million people have used Reface, according to Mogylnyi. Among them, there are stars like Snoop Dogg, Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears and Elon Mask.

For Mogylnyi, it is a great milestone — he has always wanted to have a successful business and thinks that the Reface technology has already outperformed its competitors.

“We entered this market early,” he said. It was long before other companies even dared to bet on the technology, he added.

Mogylnyi began working with machine learning — the process when a computer processes large amounts of data to learn new algorithms on its own — when he was only 19. In 2011, Mogylnyi, Petriv and Boiko founded tech startup Neocortex that was later to become Reface.

The startup immediately became Ukraine’s story of success. Forbes, Mashable, The Sun, and The Verge all wrote about the technology it has created.

According to Mogylnyi, their business took off because Reface has the quickest and most accurate tool on the market. Its algorithm adjusts faces to different lights, colors, and facial expressions within a few seconds, so users can place their images on videos of celebrities very fast.

Because the technology is so advanced, it is also used in the entertainment, film, gaming, and advertising industries, Mogylnyi said. Film studio, for example, can spend less money on production if it uses Reface, while brands can attract more customers if they offer a personalized ad.

However, the same tech used to entertain can deceive by creating deepfakes — videos that are hard to tell from the real thing and that may be used to create fake news.

Mogylnyi understands the risks but said that Reface doesn’t want to deceive people. Its final goal is to make users more creative and allow them to imagine things that are impossible in the real life.

To avoid ambiguity, the company places watermarks on images and videos to demonstrate that the videos aren’t real. The company is also working on a not-for-profit web tool to detect deepfakes, Mogylnyi said.

Reface has already become popular and even did better on the U.S. App Store than Netflix, TikTok and Hulu — tech companies that invest millions of dollars in advertising themselves. But Ukrainians have even more ideas up their sleeve.

According to Mogylnyi, they showed only 10% of what the technology is capable of. For now though, the Ukrainians do not reveal the full potential of the tool to avoid misuse.

“We want our technology to be used responsibly,” Mogylnyi said.

— By Daryna Antoniuk. [antoniuk@kyivpost.com](mailto:antoniuk@kyivpost.com)

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UNDER 30

Courtesy of Roman Mogylnyi



**Age:** 29  
**Education:** Kyiv Mohyla Academy  
**Profession:** Cofounder of Ukrainian startup Reface  
**Did you know?** In August 2020, deepfake video app Reface — co-founded by Mogylnyi and his friends — topped the U.S. App Store, ahead of even TikTok and Netflix.

The co-founders of Ukrainian IT company Reface pose for a photo: from left to right are Yaroslav Boiko, Roman Mogylnyi and Denis Dmitrenko. The company is developing a technology to swap faces in images and videos.

# ALYONA MYSKO

## Startup entrepreneur makes finance sexy, businesses profitable

Alyona Mysko has been crunching numbers since her childhood — for school, for university, for auditor PwC and now for Ukrainian business. She's so skilled at this that some firms turn into profitable enterprises once they let Mysko sort out their finances.

"Through my work, I help entrepreneurs earn more," she says. And her company Fuelfinance has worked with many entrepreneurs over three years of its existence — at least 120 companies, including Schneider, MacPaw, Petcube, Reface and Saga Development.

By improving their turnover, Mysko believes her 14-member Fuelfinance team has even contributed to Ukraine's gross domestic product.

"This is difficult to count, of course, but I am sure that there has been an impact," she says, highlighting the importance of startups, small- and medium-sized business — Fuelfinance's target audience — for the economy.

But Fuelfinance doesn't just play the role of an accountant. The company utilizes approaches that are usually attributed to tech firms: Fuelfinance's programmers automate as many processes as possible to reduce human error, deepen analytics and even make financial reports that are compiled and sent automatically.

"We try to make a system that doesn't require people to manage it," Mysko says. "Our mission is to make finance sexy."

And it seems to be working. Fuelfinance's revenue has grown fivefold over the last year and the company always has 20 clients it works with at any given time.

One of the recent clients, renowned Ukrainian startup Petcube, which develops gadgets to look after pets, has dubbed Fuelfinance "their financial totem," Mysko says. After Petcube hired them to sort out its finances, the startup increased its profitability.

Petcube CEO Yaroslav Azhnyuk met Mysko while looking for advice on automating Petcube's financial processes and quickly understood that their views aligned.

"Completely in the cloud, daily-fast — not monthly-slow, tightly integrated across the organization, and looking and feeling like it's the 2020s, not like it's the 1990s," Azhnyuk says. Fuelfinance is "helping us to see the business with a sharper eye," he adds.

And this all happened after Mysko quit her job at the Ukrainian branch of one of London-based PwC.

"I like it when it's chaos, trash, and nobody knows how to fix that," she says. "And once I clean up the mess, I get bored."

Mysko has started conquering another market — the United States.

Her mission of popularizing financial literacy, however, goes beyond running a business — she delivers lectures, teaches, consults, holds events. One of her lectures was for TEDx Kyiv.

"There are many things from math, finance and economics which can help ease life and make mundane decisions, planning, goal-setting and communication wiser."

— By Denys Krasnikov. [krasnikov@kyivpost.com](mailto:krasnikov@kyivpost.com)

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TOP 30  
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Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 28

**Education:** Master's in business and financial economics at Kyiv School of Economics

**Profession:** CEO and founder of Fuelfinance

**Did you know?** She has swum across the Bosphorus, a 6.5-kilometer natural strait and an internationally significant waterway in Turkey. A few years ago, when she was 26, she couldn't swim and was afraid of water.



# BOHDANA NEBORAK

## Bookworm helps promote local literature in Ukraine and beyond

Growing up with parents who are both writers, Bohdana Neborak understood the significance of literature early. She always loved reading but never wanted to be an author, so eventually she fulfilled her passion for literature through working at the Ukrainian Book Institute.

The institute was founded in 2016 under the Ministry of Culture, working to promote Ukrainian literature abroad. There, Neborak led the development of the first state-funded translation program, “Translate Ukraine,” designed to connect publishers with translators and spread Ukrainian works around the world.

“A translated Ukrainian book is slow media about the world of Ukrainians, about their stories, anxieties, victories, fictions, passions, adventures,” Neborak told the Kyiv Post. “And we have something to tell the world.”

During her work at the institute, Neborak and her team created large catalogues of Ukrainian poetry and prose, presenting them at major international literary events. They also held their first big competition for foreign publishers.

As a result, by the end of 2020, more than 50 new translations of Ukrainian books will be found on bookshelves throughout Europe, Asia, North and South America.

When the program was up and running, which was the ultimate goal of Neborak, she has moved on to new opportunities.

She has recently joined the team of online media The Ukrainians. There, she is advancing the “Chytanka” (Reading) section, dedicated to promoting literature

and critical thinking. It will be a platform for discussing the best Ukrainian-language literary texts, both classic and contemporary, Neborak says.

She is also creating a history of contemporary literature class for an online education platform “Projector. Humanitarium.”

Another focus of Neborak’s attention at the moment is podcast “Vzlyala i Prochytala” (Up and Read). She writes and hosts the program herself, releasing it through online Radio Podil and global streaming services.

In the first season of her podcast, she talked about violence, conformism, hate speech, privacy and truth in literature, often incorporating Ukrainian works in her episodes. In the upcoming season, she will discuss literature in the context of freedom of speech, propaganda and censorship.

“I am most interested in reading as a practice that helps to strengthen democracy in society,” Neborak says.

The podcast educates Ukrainians on critical issues, but between the lines, it fulfills another fundamental goal of Neborak — her contagious passion and curiosity about literature encourage more people to read.

Neborak herself swallows about 30 books a year, apart from the literary texts she reads for work. But when it comes to literature, she believes it’s not the figures that matter.

“I am an adept of slow thoughtful reading and never chase quantity,” she says.

— By Anastasiia Lapatina. [lapatina@kyivpost.com](mailto:lapatina@kyivpost.com)

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Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 24

**Education:** Bachelors in law from Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, masters in law from National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

**Profession:** Cultural manager, lawyer, podcast host

**Did you know?** Once a month on Saturday she visits a Ukrainian museum with friends. They call it a “Saturday breakfast club.”

# ANDREY OLEYNIK

## Teacher adopts innovative approaches to educating children, raises profession's prestige

Andrey Oleynik has always known that his mission in life is to teach children. It was clear for him right from the very first lesson in elementary school, when he was just a kid.

Two decades later, in 2020, working as a primary teacher in the city of Kamianske in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Oleynik gained fame that he had never dreamed of before — he won the annual national award Global Teacher Prize Ukraine in the category of “choice of Ukrainians” after over 40,000 people out of 110,000 voted for him.

But this would never have happened if Oleynik hadn't followed his dream. His parents, at first, were against their son's desire to become a teacher and insisted on choosing another profession, such as a manager. So Oleynik worked as an administrator in different places like in a hotel or in a wellness center, but he “wasn't happy at all while doing that job.”

At the age of 24, he made a fateful decision and this time no one could change his mind. Oleynik entered Pedagogical University and started working as a teacher. He still remembers his first working day like it was yesterday.

“I realized that it's the place where I belong,” said Oleynik.

Now, teaching 30 kids in the same school where Oleynik himself used to study many years ago makes him full of joy.

“This is an incredible process,” said Oleynik. “Children feel everything — if a person comes to them with love, they pay back with the same feelings.”

He believes that today's children are very different from previous generations and the ways of giving them knowl-

edge should be much more creative, not only from books.

“A system that previously existed no longer works. You have to develop as a teacher,” he said.

During the lessons, Oleynik utilizes Lego sets, animations, sings, he even dances with kids, so that even learning boring information turns into an interesting process. It helps children to achieve better results and gives a positive attitude for life in the future, he believes.

“Not everybody has to become mathematicians or philologists, the main thing is that kids can feel happy here and now at school, especially at primary school, when their first skills are discovered,” said Oleynik.

But no matter how big is his love for the profession, Oleynik is upset about the lack of prestige of teachers' work in Ukraine. As a result, not so many young people want to start their career in this sphere. Moreover, when young teachers come to school, older colleagues often don't take them seriously; sometimes young professionals can even be bullied by the administration.

“Many of them see such a mess and leave their job after one month of work,” said Oleynik. “It's a problem.”

When his current students go to secondary school next year, Oleynik won't take a new class. His plan is much more ambitious — the teacher wants to become the school's principal.

“I have strength, desire and motivation to do much more — to lead, develop, and motivate other teachers,” said Oleynik.

— By Natalia Datskevych. [datskevych@kyivpost.com](mailto:datskevych@kyivpost.com)

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Courtesy of Andriy Oliylyuk



**Age:** 27

**Education:** Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University

**Profession:** Primary school teacher

**Did you know?** During the quarantine he started baking cakes, and now even takes orders and sells them.

# ANDRII PRYKHODCHENKO

## Designer creates app to help doctors get to hospitals amid lockdown

In mid-March, when the government first imposed a lockdown in Ukraine to curb the spread of the coronavirus, Kyiv resident Andrii Prykhodchenko was surfing the web looking for ways he could help.

Public transport was canceled and the doctors were searching for volunteer drivers to take them to hospitals. Prykhodchenko, a creative director and co-founder at Rerezent, a company designing presentations including for TEDx Kyiv, was happy to help and drive someone to work.

There was a problem though. Doctors and drivers failed to effectively communicate with one another.

The doctors created a chat in a messenger app, but it did not help much. The number of people there quickly grew to up to 12,000. It was overloaded with new requests for free trips and older ones were getting lost.

"I opened that chat because I am a driver. I have a car and I was able to help. But after seeing what was happening in this chat, I realized that I would not help anyone there, because it was just impossible to track who needed what," Prykhodchenko told the Kyiv Post.

It was around 11 p.m. on March 18 when Prykhodchenko identified the problem and 3 a.m. when he fixed it. Despite not being a programmer, he managed to create the app in four hours thanks to "no code development platform," a tool for creating software without coding.

"I dropped a line in that chat saying: 'Folks, I made an application. It must be more convenient there. Use it. I'm going to bed,'" he said.

When he woke up, around a dozen requests for trips were already there, along with a few error reports. Prykhodchenko fixed the errors and moved on to the next task, attracting users to the app he created.

He called his app Cometa.

His girlfriend and friends helped to fund the app — it cost nearly \$60 — and to spread the word about it. They negotiated free advertising on the radio and on billboards. By the end of the day of the app's launch, over 500 people had registered on it.

According to Prykhodchenko, almost 3,900 trips to and from hospitals took place thanks to Cometa during the two months of lockdown.

After Ukraine resumed public transport on May 22, the application ceased to be in demand.

"As soon as quarantine came to an end, there was not a single request for a ride," Prykhodchenko said.

"The biggest reward was to see how a doctor says thank you to a driver. This means that there are at least two people who are happy about it," he said.

— By Anna Myroniuk. [myroniuk@kyivpost.com](mailto:myroniuk@kyivpost.com)

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Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 27  
**Education:** Radio-electronic devices and printing technologies, Kyiv Polytechnic Institute  
**Profession:** Designer  
**Did you know?** When Prykhodchenko was a student, he created his first mobile app inspired by a friend's hobby. The app helped in making friendship bracelets.

# VICTORIA REPA

## Techie creates fitness app BetterMe to help millions live healthy lives

Victoria Repa leads a 130-person tech firm that develops mobile applications to help people live healthier lives.

Repa's firm is called BetterMe, and it has developed about 10 apps that help people stay fit and strong: exercise, eat better, drink enough water, meditate, jog and so on.

The apps released by Repa's company have collectively been downloaded by 80 million people. Over 27 million downloads were registered in 2019 alone, according to U.S. analytical company App Annie, making BetterMe the fastest-growing app developer in the health & fitness category. A monthly subscription costs \$10.

Such entrepreneurial success has come less than four years since she started BetterMe in 2016, at age 24.

A graduate of Donetsk National University, Repa moved to Kyiv in 2014 after she received a scholarship at the Kyiv School of Economics. After graduation, she joined U.S. consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble as a finance manager. For a year and a half, she was responsible for the budgeting of logistics in Ukraine.

"In 1.5 years, I understood that career growth in a corporation is slow, while I wanted to progress, go through challenges, adventures," Repa says. So she started to work in tech.

Repa joined local firm Genesis, which works in media and technology, as an analyst responsible for assessing media content. While doing that, she noticed the rapidly increasing demand for quality content in health and fitness. People googled the topic, looking for ways to get fit.

Repa and her colleague Vital Laptенок started to work on a fitness app to tap into the market that today is estimated at nearly \$3 billion. As a result, 11 months after entering IT, Repa co-founded BetterMe.

The company was first developed under Genesis's umbrella, but soon branched off as a separate company. Over the last three years, BetterMe has achieved a lot, creating something Repa calls an "ecosystem" for health and fitness. Repa won recognition from Forbes. The U.S. business magazine named her one of the 30 brightest entrepreneurs under 30 years old in Europe.

Now her company plans to put all the apps it created together and turn them into a one-stop application and "become No. 1 in health and fitness," Repa says.

For strength, she turned to Asian culture and took on different types of yoga, breathing techniques and meditation. "I believe that all diets and trends that exist today — they are just 'retelling' long-standing Asian philosophy," she says.

Repa tries to keep calm and maintain harmony while facing myriad business challenges every day. "It is pointless to seek enlightenment in a cave" where nothing happens," she says.

She generally perceives any negative experience in business as a possibility to find harmful behavioral patterns in herself. "And having worked on them, you can get a little happier and better," she says.

— By Denys Krasnikov. [krasnikov@kyivpost.com](mailto:krasnikov@kyivpost.com)

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**Age:** 27

**Education:** Master's in business and financial economics at Kyiv School of Economics

**Profession:** CEO and co-founder at BetterMe

**Did you know?**

Repa does aerial yoga, a type of yoga that utilizes silk slings suspended from the ceiling to perform traditional yoga exercises. In addition to meditation and breathing exercises, it helps her to run her business.



Courtesy of Victoria Repa

# MISHA RUDOMINSKI

## 20-year-old makes hassle-free internet, leads aerospace firm

Imagine you're a 20-year-old university student whose tech startup starts taking off internationally when you're suddenly tapped to be CEO of a space company.

This is the life of Misha Rudominski, an engineer and entrepreneur. Born and raised in Kyiv, he helped Ukraine train novice pilots, pioneered a new wireless 4G solution for laptops and is making a new rocket to launch satellites from Ukrainian territory.

"I like to risk," said Rudominski. "I like to see that the more effort, the more mind and intelligence I put into something, the more it comes back."

Over the past year, Rudominski has been sinking much of his effort into his startup, Nect, which has developed a universal wireless connectivity solution for laptops. He was tired of constantly asking for the Wi-Fi password and wanted a better way.

One part universal 4G USB modem, one part secure data service, Nect's device allows laptop users to access the internet in 113 countries and counting, without having to bother with SIM-cards. The company is growing its infrastructure through partnerships, letting its clients access almost any 4G network for a similar fee that people pay for a single local data plan.

The startup has raised \$350,000 on crowdfunding platform Indiegogo and will be ready to ship its first production run in January to customers in the U.S., Canada, U.K., Japan, India, France, Germany and Ukraine.

Being preoccupied with Nect, Rudominski said he barely has time to complete his online coursework at the Polytechnic University of Turin in Italy. So he was in for a

shock when startup Space Logistics Ukraine asked him to be its CEO in August, believing he was the best man to steer the company through growth and success.

"This is what I wanted to do for the past five-six years," he said.

Rudominski's love of space and aerotech began in childhood and grew in high school where he authored space-related research papers, which continued into university. In 2014, he home-built a small drone that was used to train Ukrainian military pilots. When he attended the University of British Columbia, he was part of a research team that developed reliable ways to communicate with Mars and built an airlock prototype.

"I like making things with my hands and I also like space... that's called aerospace engineering," he said. "But I always had an entrepreneurial mindset... I would like to become the head of a space agency or a space company."

The Space Logistics proposal was a dream come true. After agonizing for days, he accepted.

Over the next several years, the company will make a commercial space vehicle to launch small satellites into orbit. Because of its limited size, it will be possible to launch from Ukraine — the cast-off rocket stages will fall harmlessly into the Black Sea or burn up in the atmosphere.

"We see it as a civil technology that will allow on-demand private launches of nano-satellites, which will be mostly used for scientific research, communication and screening of earth's surface," said Rudominski.

— By Igor Kossov. [kossov@kyivpost.com](mailto:kossov@kyivpost.com)

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UNDER 30

Volodymyr Petrov



**Age:** 20

**Education:** University of British Columbia, Polytechnic University of Turin

**Profession:** IT and aerospace entrepreneur

**Did you know?** Before going to university in Canada, 17-year-old Misha randomly hitchhiked across southern Europe, meeting all kinds of crazy characters such as Albanian drug dealers.

# YANA SHEMAYEVA (JERRY HEIL)

## Pop singer becomes famous with relatable catchy hits

It's nearly impossible to live in Ukraine and never hear a song by Jerry Heil. And when one does, chances are it will be stuck in their head, especially if they speak Ukrainian.

The singer came a long way from covering hits by famous musicians to being covered herself. And now she also writes songs for artists whom she could only see on TV some eight years ago.

"This was a chain of events that formed a larger pattern that still works for me," Jerry Heil told the Kyiv Post.

Yana Shemayeva, which is the real name of Jerry Heil, started her YouTube channel in 2012, covering songs by her favorite bands, like Keane. Only four years later, she got noticed for her covers of Ukrainian artists — after Okean Elzy frontman Svyatoslav Vakarchuk shared her versions of the band's songs. More Ukrainian covers followed — and more approvals from Onuka, The Maneken and Pianoboy.

In 2017, Onuka's and The Maneken's Vidlik Records label produced Jerry Heil's first mini-album of four original songs. It was a sentimental electronic pop album, well-made, but not something that would top the charts.

It took more songs, an appearance on a TV talent show and finding the right collaborator before Jerry Heil recorded her breakthrough hit. With musician and sound producer Roman 'Morphom' Cherenov, in 2019, she made "Okhrana, Otmyna" — a track that made her famous.

For the song's lyrical hook, Jerry Heil used a phrase one could hear at every cash register in Ukraine — "Okhrana, otmyna" or "Security, cancellation." Cashiers use it to signal the security guards that a customer wants to cancel an item on the receipt. If you buy groceries — you've heard it.

Jerry Heil put it to music with perfect rhymes and catchy vocals while telling an ironic heartbreak story. The poppy tune sticks in the memory and is easy to sing along. It's a recipe for viral hits, which Jerry Heil learned to produce with prolific ingenuity, calling her genre "everyday pop."

"In my music, a person hears the words they use in everyday life," Jerry Heil says. "What I do, how I look and the ideas I carry — it's just something home-like, relatable."

But she likes to break that pattern too. In 2020, she made it to the finals of Ukraine's selection to the Eurovision Song Contest with "Vegan," an English-language song about her life as one. Jerry Heil has also become a sought-after songwriter, creating tailor-made hits for pop stars like Vera Brezhneva and Dantes.

"When I write songs for others, I want them to feel as if they wrote it. I talk to the person about their feelings, about what they want to say. Then, I write with the words of this person."

— By Artur Korniienko. [korniienko@kyivpost.com](mailto:korniienko@kyivpost.com)

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UNDER 30

Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 25

**Education:** Choral conducting, R. Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music

**Profession:** Pop singer, songwriter

**Did you know?** She assembled her stage name, Jerry Heil, from the Jerry Mouse cartoon character's name and the first American surname she liked on the internet. Heil should be pronounced as "hale," not like the Nazi salute.

# DANYLO SHYPOV

## Pediatric cardiologist treats children with severe heart defects

For Danylo Shypov, saving children's lives is not a feat, it's his daily routine.

As a pediatric cardiologist, Shypov is a member of one of the most professional medical teams in Ukraine — cardiologists, heart surgeons, and anesthesiologists — at Kyiv's Center for Pediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery.

Over the past 15 years, more than 8,000 kids with severe heart defects have been treated there and given a chance to live a normal life.

Shypov has already been working there for six years and conducted hundreds of consultations and heart ultrasound examinations. But what is most important is a chance to get experience from the center's eminent doctors.

"I am inspired by my colleagues and I am lucky that I learn from the best specialists," says Shypov. On average, every cardiologist at the center treats from 1,000 to 1,200 patients per year.

Before joining the 60-member team in Kyiv, Shypov studied medicine in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk. He wanted to stay in Donetsk and work at a local cardiology center, but the plan fell through when Russia started its war in the eastern Donbas region in 2014. Like many doctors, Shypov left. "No one from whom I could learn the profession stayed in Donetsk," says the cardiologist.

Shypov's desire to study medicine started early. He grew up in a family with pediatricians and therapists.

"I am a doctor in the third generation," he says. He is especially proud of his 79-year old grandfather, a microbiologist who still teaches students at a university in Donetsk. His grandfather opted to stay because he couldn't bear leaving his friends and work behind.

When Shypov was a kid, he took up the unusual hobby of "drawing bacteria" after his grandfather started taking him to the university where he worked and showing how to use a microscope. "When you are surrounded by such an atmosphere from an early age, then there's one road in life — to medicine," says Shypov.

After moving to Kyiv, Shypov was surprised by how far Ukraine and the center he works at now have progressed in treating kids with difficult heart diseases.

For instance, three decades ago, babies born with transposition of the great arteries had no chance to survive. "Now this defect is fixed in our center with 1.5% and lower mortality rate," says Shypov. "It's fantastic."

Moreover, Shypov says the center's prenatal program are able to children with severe heart defects while still in the womb and repair them right after birth.

Despite all problems in health care in Ukraine and the fact that doctors' work is often undervalued here, Shypov is happy about his professional life and the country. He's never thought of moving anywhere else.

"I'm a patriot and I want to do my best here," he says.

— By *Natalia Datskevych*. [datskevych@kyivpost.com](mailto:datskevych@kyivpost.com)

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Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 28

**Education:** Donetsk National Medical University

**Profession:** Pediatric cardiologist

**Did you know?** During his student years, Shypov played drums in the university jazz orchestra.

# EUGEN SKRYPNYK

## Founder of Shum rave uses underground techno to change eastern Ukraine's image

"Shum rave was born out of love," Eugen Skrypnyk says. Love for his friends, love for his hometown of Sloviansk and love for his region, the eastern Donbas.

Many associate the east of Ukraine and the town of Sloviansk with war, occupation, and danger. Skrypnyk wants to change that. He already has started to do it.

It's been six years since the occupation and liberation of Sloviansk. But the memories and emptiness remain. Although the town is free, the youth felt trapped. A noise curfew meant that there were no gatherings or parties in the city center after 11. Instead, there was silence and haunting memories.

Skrypnyk's best friend told him she wanted a place to dance, to feel free and to let music drown out the silence they were stuck with. He planned to give her exactly that. "When you love someone, you'll do anything for them," he says.

Skrypnyk gathered a few eastern DJs, found an abandoned building in his town and set up the first Shum rave. In Ukrainian and Russian, Shum means "noise." A hundred people came and danced until 7 in the morning. The next Shum brought even more. By the third event, news of the rave had spread throughout the east. People came from the neighboring towns of Kratatorsk and Druzhkivka and from farther places like Kharkiv and even Kyiv.

Before, when mentioning Sloviansk, people would think of the war. Now, in the east, if you mention Sloviansk, they think of Shum rave.

And when they think of Shum rave, they think of Skrypnyk.

Although the coronavirus stalled many of his plans, Skrypnyk didn't let that stop him from his mission. That's the type of person he is. He gained support from the United Nations Development Program to create films of beautiful locations in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. By filming DJ sets in these locations, he hopes to spread eastern techno culture, showcase that there is beauty in Donbas and encourage tourism within the region.

Shum is not the only thing Skrypnyk is involved with. He also works with Plan B fest, a festival that brings in lecturers and speakers about innovation in eastern Ukraine during the day and concerts and DJs at night. The festival gathers creatives and innovators in the hopes of improving their region. It's a familiar mission for Skrypnyk.

Skrypnyk has many plans for the future. Shum has just started to grow. He planned to open a school for DJs, but is waiting until the pandemic dies down.

"We are just getting started," he says.

— By Elina Kent. [kent@kyivpost.com](mailto:kent@kyivpost.com)

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Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 23

**Education:** Slavic Pedagogical Lyceum

**Profession:** Community manager at InshaOsvita

**Did you know?** When Skrypnyk was 7, he broke his spine and had to learn how to walk again.



# KHRYSTYNA SOLOVIY

## Proud of her heritage, singer promotes Ukrainian folk

When Khrystyna Soloviy decided to take part in the vocal show The Voice of Ukraine in 2013, she did not want to become a famous singer. What she desired more was Ukrainians to hear the beautiful but mostly unknown folk songs of Lemko, an ethnic group that originated in the Carpathian Mountains.

“I didn’t want to show my vocal skills or artistry — I wanted people to hear Lemko songs,” Soloviy says.

Soloviy did not expect the show to be a turning point in her life. Although she did not win, she suddenly became famous in Ukraine.

Seven years later, her schedule is packed with performances and her music videos have millions of views on YouTube. However, Soloviy had a long journey to reach that level of success.

She was born in Drohobych, a town in Lviv Oblast, into a family of musicians. From early years, Soloviy enjoyed listening to her grandmother singing Ukrainian folk songs. She loved singing herself and quickly memorized new songs.

Music became all the more important for Soloviy when she found out about her Lemko origin. Her predecessors’ songs, melodic yet powerful, magnified the singer and she realized they deserved a bigger audience.

So at the age of 20, Soloviy decided to take a chance at The Voice of Ukraine. Her touching performance moved Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, the frontman of Ukraine’s most successful rock band Okean Elzy and a former lawmaker, who was one of the judges of The Voice. Not only did Vakarchuk become Soloviy’s coach on the show, but also her producer after that.

Vakarchuk helped Soloviy with releasing her debut album “Zhyva Voda” (“Live Water”) in 2015, which was highly praised by local critics. The album included 10 Lemko songs and two of her own songs: “Trymay” (“Hold Me”) and “Synia Pisnia (“The Blue Song”).

“Trymay” is the first song ever written by Soloviy and one of her biggest hits. Its audio version on YouTube now has over 32 million views.

Soloviy’s second album, “Liubyi Druh,” (“Dear Friend”) released in 2018, mostly featured her own songs. Here, the singer also started blending folk with pop and electronic motives.

Soloviy says her third release is on the way.

Although the singer’s life changed drastically since her first appearance on the singing show, one of her principles remained intact. Back then, Soloviy said she would never sing in Russian, which often appears more commercially successful since covers audience in more countries. She remains true to her word.

“My native language is Ukrainian. I think, write and feel in Ukrainian and I don’t see any alternatives for myself,” Soloviy says.

Soloviy was an active supporter of protests during Ukraine’s turbulent 2014. She also supports the animal welfare initiative UAnimals and inspires others to do good.

“Being a singer is a great responsibility for me,” she says.

— By Daria Shulzhenko. [shulzhenko@kyivpost.com](mailto:shulzhenko@kyivpost.com)

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INTERNATIONAL  
RENAISSANCE  
FOUNDATION

TOP 30  
UNDER 30

Oleg Petrasjuk



**Age:** 27

**Education:** Philology, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

**Profession:** Singer

**Did you know?** In her student years, she wanted to become a librarian.

# ZLATA SYMONENKO

## White-collar defense attorney defends police rape victim

Criminal defense lawyer and legal expert Zlata Symonenko could have become a professional highboard diver, but chose law school instead.

Today, she defends large businesses and foreign investors working in Ukraine from allegations of economic crimes, illegal expropriation of corporate rights or assets or unlawful actions by state agencies.

She says this job merges her interest in criminal law and the business sector, the driver of the economy.

Having worked first as an assistant attorney and then as an attorney, Symonenko saw the problems of Ukraine's criminal justice system — the low qualifications of staff, the fights between the agencies and corruption.

After the 2014 EuroMaidan Revolution that ousted corrupt President Viktor Yanukovich and his cronies from power, she joined an expert group called the Reanimation Package of Reforms and had a chance to contribute her ideas and views on how to improve the efficiency of law enforcement and prosecution agencies.

Symonenko contributed to drafting the laws on the National Police, the State Investigation Bureau and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau.

She says she has received offers from various political parties. But she does not see herself as a lawmaker in parliament.

The most important case for Symonenko now is the case of Nelya Pogrebitska, a victim of torture and rape by police officers at Kaharlyk, a town outside of Kyiv.

When the incident became public in May, it sparked an outcry about the country's failed police reform.

But Symonenko says, for her, it was more about breaking the silence about violence against women.

"There is a tendency when women are told not to complain, not to speak up about violence," she says, adding that the male-dominated justice system does not give female victims an opportunity to fully open up, as they might feel sensitive or ashamed to talk to men about the personal details of the violence.

Symonenko is on Pogrebitska's all-female defender team along with lawyers Olena Sotnyk, Tetyana Kozachenko and Anna Kalynchuk.

"Knowing the realities of law enforcement and criminal prosecution and seeing this young woman left one-on-one against the system, we realized that only women can understand her," Symonenko reflects on the decision to take Pogrebitska's case pro bono. "She was in a critical situation surrounded only by men, who are investigators and lawyers."

The Prosecutor General's Office announced on Nov. 16 that the pre-trial investigation would charge five Kaharlyk police officers with torture, forced disappearance and rape.

Symonenko is prepared for a hard fight in court: It is a high-profile case of police brutality where a police chief could be convicted for knowing of and ignoring a horrible crime.

— By *Bermet Talant*. [bermet@kyivpost.com](mailto:bermet@kyivpost.com)

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INTERNATIONAL  
RENAISSANCE  
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TOP 30  
UNDER 30

**Age:** 28

**Education:** LLM in Criminal Law at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University

**Profession:** Counsel at Sayenko Kharenko, expert with Reanimation Package of Reforms, former member of the Civil Oversight Council at the National Anti-Corruption Bureau

**Did you know?** Symonenko loves sports. As a child, she dedicated 10 years to highboard diving. These days, she enjoys running.



Volodymyr Petrov

# DARYNA ZEVINA

## Swimming champion ready to win at next Olympics in Tokyo

Born into a family of professional swimmers — Yuriy and Svitlana Zevina — Daryna had a good change to build a brilliant career in sports. And the results were not long in coming.

At the age of 14, Zevina made her debut as a backstroke champion during a European junior swimming championship in Prague, Czech Republic. She won three medals back, two gold and one silver.

“I did not expect that I would swim so good and I got such a euphoria,” says Zevina.

By the age of 26, Zevina collected almost two dozen medals from some of the most prestigious European and world swimming competitions in the backstroke, the athlete’s favorite swimming style.

Among her latest achievements was a silver medal in Glasgow, Scotland’s largest city, during European Championship 2019. Zevina swam 200 meters in 122 seconds.

This year she was ready to conquer the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games. For these games, the athlete returned to training after a one-year break, but it’s been rescheduled to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“The goals remain, although it is not clear now if the competition will take place at all,” says Zevina.

Zevina believes that several factors helped her achieve impressive results in swimming — her height (5 feet 11 inches), long hands and legs, and her “mother’s genes.”

When she was completely exhausted after trainings and competitions, she used to have moments of de-

spair and a desire to give up. But she pulled herself together and kept going.

Every week, Zevina has 11 training sessions on water, 90 minutes each, plus three sessions in the gym.

“It’s hard physical work,” she said. “But it’s satisfying.”

Zevina polishes her skills at swimming pool Yunist (Youth) in Kyiv, one of the most popular pools among athletes. Over the past five years, she has observed an alarming trend: the number of kids willing or able to become the next swimming champion has declined.

“Today’s children have other goals, tasks and priorities,” says Zevina. “Very few are ready to cope with strong physical activities and strive for something big.”

There are too few pools for children across the country, she believes, and some are just not affordable.

She also believes that it’s not helpful that Ukrainians don’t know names of many prominent Ukrainian athletes, including swimmers.

“People only know soccer players, singers, actors. Few people know about our athletes,” said Zevina. “It’s a big problem — nobody popularizes sports.”

As for future plans, she may open her own swimming school and serve as a mentor, not a coach.

“You need to have a special mindset to deal with it (as a true coach),” said Zevina. “You have to be calm and balanced. I am not that kind — I’m very emotional and quick-tempered.”

— By Natalia Datskevych. [datskevych@kyivpost.com](mailto:datskevych@kyivpost.com)

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INTERNATIONAL  
RENAISSANCE  
FOUNDATION

TOP 30  
UNDER 30



**Age:** 26  
**Education:** National University of Physical Education and Sport  
**Profession:** Swimmer  
**Did you know?** As a child, Zevina dreamed of becoming a pianist.

# 10 FACTS about KYIV POST



1. **Ukraine's top English-language news source**
2. **Celebrated its 25th birthday on Oct. 18, 2020**
3. **Opinion leader** – quoted by top publications globally about events in Ukraine (including CNN, BBC, National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Guardian)
4. **Proud winner of the 2014 Missouri Honor Medal** for Distinguished Service in Journalism, a lifetime staff achievement award. First and only recipient in Ukraine
5. **History of mentorship and** developing talent. Kyiv Post alumni work at such leading publications such as Bloomberg, the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal
6. **Community newspaper** – 7,500 print weekly circulation
7. **Ukraine's Global Voice** – the world's window on Ukraine, (record 64 million page views in 2014; most quoted outlet in Western media during Euromaidan Revolution that ousted President Viktor Yanuovych on Feb. 22, 2014)
8. **Provider of diverse content**, including coverage of business, politics, lifestyle and Russia's war, as well as special projects as Honest History, Journalism of Tolerance, Oligarch Watch and Justice For Journalists
9. **Leader in media and business solutions** – first media outlet in Ukraine to introduce a paywall, in 2013, for content
10. **Exclusive events** organized for members of the local and international business and political communities; tailored advertising projects offered through KP Brand Studio; customized editorial services for businesses in need of English-language editing



**1** Anastasia Sleptsova, a promoter of Ukraine's information technology sector and founder of the Black Sea Summit, accepts her award from Yevgen Sysoyev, a managing partner at Aventures Capital on Nov. 29, 2016 at the Top 30 Under 30 Awards Ceremony following the Kyiv Post Tiger Conference.

**2** Sofia Cheliak, cultural manager, reacts as she shows her award during a TOP 30 under 30 award ceremony on Dec. 10, 2019.

**3** Investigative journalists Lesya Ivanova (L), Valeriya Egoshyna (C), and Kateryna Lykhohliad speaks as they received the awards during a TOP 30 under 30 award ceremony on Dec. 10, 2019.

**4** Winners of the Kyiv Post's 2017 Top 30 Under 30 award pose for a group picture after the ceremony on Dec. 5 at the Hilton Kyiv.

**5** Iryna Shyba, lawyer and executive director of DEJURE Foundation (R), poses for a photograph with her award.

**6** Yaroslav Azhnyuk, the co-founder of Petcube, a company producing gadgets for pet owners (R), receives the award from the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Dmytro Shymkiv during Kyiv Post's 2017 Top 30 Under 30 award ceremony on Dec. 5 at the Hilton Kyiv. (Photos by Volodymyr Petrov, Kostyantyn Chernichkin, Oleg Petراسيuk, Pavlo Podufalov)



**1** Former lawmaker and a Kyiv Post columnist Serhiy Leschenko (C) presents the award to singer Alina Pash (L) at a TOP 30 under 30 award ceremony on Dec. 10, 2019, at Unit City in Kyiv.

**2** Roman Bagayev, two-time top tank ace in the Ukrainian army, speaks after accepting his award as winner of the 2018 Kyiv Post Top 30 Under 30 annual award at the Unit City Innovation Park in Kyiv on Dec. 10, 2019.

**3** Maiia Moskvych, as well as a Ukrainian war veteran and a gold medalist of Invictus Games, speaks during the award ceremony at the InterContinental Kyiv hotel on Dec. 11, 2018.

**4** Following a Dec. 10 ceremony, 17 of the 30 winners of the Kyiv Post's 2019 Top 30 Under 30 awards pose. From left, eco-inventor Valentyn Frechka, investigative journalist Kateryna Lykhohliad, communications expert

Maria Artemenko, military officer Roman Bagayev, IT entrepreneurs Maksym Petruk and Lidiya Terpel, promoter of inclusivity in cinemas Viktoria Luchka, war veteran and entrepreneur Roman Nabozhnyak, teacher Oleksandr Cherkas, film director Nariman Aliyev, civil society leader Maksym Studilko, entrepreneur Kateryna Mykhalko, cultural manager Sofia Cheliak, medical inventor Olga Kharasakhal, fashion designer Ivan Frolov, music video director Yuriy Dvizhon and investigative journalist Lesya Ivanov. The event took place during the newspaper's annual Tiger Conference on Dec. 10, 2019, at Unit City in Kyiv.

**5** Winner of the 2018 Kyiv Post Top 30 Under 30 annual award Dariya Loseva, as well as CEO of Myhelix, smiles as she receives her award during the ceremony at the InterContinental Kyiv hotel on Dec. 11, 2018. (Photos by Volodymyr Petrov, Kostyantyn Chernichkin, Oleg Petراسيuk)

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