



UCI Law LL.M. Student Yurii Zinchenko Finds the “Windows” to Help his Home Country of Ukraine

DECEMBER 13, 2023

IRVINE, Calif. (Dec. 13, 2023) — When Yurii Zinchenko, his wife, Vitalina, and 3-year-old daughter, Anastasia, arrived in Whitefish, Montana, in August 2022, they were refugees seeking a safe place for their family after fleeing their war-torn home city of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine. After the first days of the Russian invasion, they fled westward joining the flood of other Ukrainians forced to leave their homes in search of safety. A group of Americans in Montana and California sponsored Yurii and his family and arranged for their trip from a war zone to safety. They found welcoming and supportive communities in Whitefish, where they first settled, and now Irvine.



Yurii Zinchenko, LL.M. Student, UCI Law

Ever since arriving in the U.S., Yurii — who has a Ph.D. in law and practiced as an attorney in Ukraine for 19 years — has been on a path forward to find avenues to help his home country rebuild.

“If you’re knocking and they don’t open the door, then use the window,” is what Yurii’s father always said to him, a message he finds more prescient than ever.

Determined to fulfill his duty to country and family, Yurii turned his attention — and legal skills — to the crippled energy infrastructure of Ukraine, to the hospitals, the neo-natal wards, that had little or interrupted power. Yurii teamed with local Rotarians in Montana, and together they engaged in a humanitarian response campaign to provide solar+ lithium-battery-powered generators to front-line hospitals in Ukraine through a Ukrainian-American-led company, New Use Energy. The efforts have been successful, lights and generators are working, babies are breathing.

For him, it was personal. “I was able to serve as a liaison between Rotarians in the U.S. and Ukraine, and a maternity hospital in my home city of Kharkiv, where we quickly raised enough funds to deliver two solar+ generators and a solar array directly to the hospital where my daughter was delivered three years prior,” said Yurii.



Photo: Staff at the Kharkiv Regional Perinatal Center with one of the generators delivered in March through the Ukraine Resilience Campaign.

During the last six months, the Power Up Ukraine campaign also delivered generators to large clinical hospitals in Kherson and Mykolaiv, other besieged front-line cities in southern Ukraine. The units were used in [the maternity](#) clinics and children's wards to power incubators, infant warmers, patient monitors, surgery rooms, and other critical pieces of medical equipment.

“This rewarding volunteer experience increased my desire to use my education, skills and background to help meet critical needs and foster an environment of resilience among the Ukrainian people,” said Yurii.

Through his new local network, Yurii began looking into opportunities to study law in the U.S. with a special Master of Laws (LL.M.) program for foreign students. He was accepted to the University of California, Irvine School of Law and began his course of study this past fall.

Heeding his father's advice, Yurii has found many “windows” along the way as well as assistance to help his family, now including newborn son Lionel, to make these dreams come true.

In November 2023, Yurii joined in another fundraiser to provide power to Ukrainian hospitals and other critical facilities through the [Ukraine Resilience Campaign](#). Since he found support and help here in the U.S., he wants to continue to help his home country of Ukraine. After completing his LL.M. degree at UCI Law, he hopes to work for an international law firm, in-house for a multinational corporation, or non-governmental or humanitarian organization.

“Yurii has been a wonderful part of the UCI Law community,” said Khary D. Hornsby, UCI Law Assistant Dean, Chief Global and Executive Programs Officer. “He's hard-working, engaged, and warm-hearted in everything he does. We are so lucky to have him!”

“UCI Law students are so lucky to have the chance to study at such a beautiful university,” said Yurii. “I have received so much help from so many. I have an obligation to pay it forward, to double or triple the kindnesses and generosity I have received.”

About the University of California, Irvine School of Law

The University of California, Irvine School of Law is a visionary law school that provides an innovative and comprehensive curriculum, prioritizes public service, and demonstrates a commitment to equity within the legal profession. Nearly half of all UCI Law's J.D. graduates are people of color, and almost a third are first-generation students. At UCI Law, we are driven to improve our local, national, and global communities by grappling with important issues as scholars, as practitioners, and as teachers who are preparing the next generation of leaders. The collaborative and interdisciplinary community at UCI Law includes extraordinary students, world-renowned faculty, dedicated staff, engaged alumni, and enthusiastic supporters. Connect with us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Threads](#), [X](#), and [sign up for our monthly newsletter](#) for the latest news and events at UCI Law.

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University of California, Irvine School of Law

401 E. Peltason Drive, Suite 1000, Irvine, CA 92697-8000(949) 824-0066

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