



WINGS: STORIES OF CHANGE



2022 - 2024

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GENERAL INFO

WINGS (Women Included: Nurturing Growth and Security) is a five-year project (2020 – 2025), funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by Pact. The goal of the project is enhanced economic prosperity for women and the most vulnerable and marginalized living in Ukraine. The project was implemented in **23** territorial communities of Kyiv, Poltava, Lviv, and Kharkiv regions. The project reach was **3,423** women.

Project implementing partner organizations: *Convictus All Ukrainian Charitable Organization, Light of Hope Charitable organization and Walnut House Charitable Fund, Beetroot Academy, Swedish-Ukrainian IT school.*

Project resource partners: *agro-industrial holding Astarta-Kyiv, agricultural holding TAS Agro, ING Bank Ukraine, EY Ukraine, Olena Pinchuk Foundation, Tres FRANCAIS restaurant network.*

The project offered the following services:

- ✓ **Comprehensive service package** (for women without stable income) that included the Studio of Opportunities intervention, Employability skills training, and Basic Business skills training.

Studio of Opportunities was designed to motivate and empower women. The program was a combination of group and individual sessions to increase self-esteem and self-confidence and build financial literacy skills and skills in goal setting. The program also tackled the issues of self-care, stress management, and women's rights.

Employability skills training provided an overview of existing labor market and job opportunities in the community, career counselling, and skills building in resume development, participation in job interviews, and negotiating terms of employment.

Basic business skills training focused on business planning tools, basic financial instruments, and basics of sales and marketing. Participants could apply for seed funding on a competitive basis.

- ✓ **Business model validation program** was designed for women who had solid business ideas or already had operating businesses and needed to expand them. The program offered intensive business training, mentoring support, and access to funding.
- ✓ **IT skills building program** offered basic and advanced IT courses.

The project also strengthened:

a nurturing environment that promoted women's autonomy and economic security

the capacities of civil society organizations and public agencies to implement women's economic empowerment programs

We are sharing the stories of project beneficiaries.

2024



STORY 1. DOLL MAKING. KHRYSTYNA KUSHNIR FROM LVIV

HOW A HISTORIAN DEVELOPED A DOLL-MAKING BUSINESS

“What do you want to be?” Khrystyna’s parents once asked her this in high school. *“A fashion designer,”* she answered, because since childhood she adored sewing clothes for dolls, embroidering and drawing. *“A fashion designer is not serious,”* her parents replied. *“You should study history!”*

Following her parents’ guidance, Khrystyna entered the History Department of Lviv University and successfully graduated. *“I’m grateful to my parents because I have a great education background,”* Khrystyna says, *“but it wasn’t my dream.”*

UNEXPECTED GIFT

After university, Khrystyna worked for more than 10 years in the district state administration of her hometown of Zolochiv. It seemed that the childhood hobby had long been forgotten. But one day, while looking for a birthday present for a colleague, she came across photos of handmade dolls on the internet. *“For some reason, I immediately imagined that my colleague should have such a doll.”* Khrystyna read all the articles she could find about the stuffed doll technique and ordered special materials and paints. *“I got so caught up in the process,”* she says. *“I recalled all my needlework, sewing and drawing skills.”*

In the end, not only the birthday girl but also all her colleagues received dolls from Khrystyna. Thanks to word of mouth, Khrystyna began to receive new orders one after another. *“Although the price of my products was very symbolic, in some months I earned more money than my salary in the district state administration,”* she says. She even began to dream of quitting her job and making dolls on a full-time basis. *“But I didn’t dare,”* Khrystyna admits. *“The prospect of running my own business scared me.”*

However, Khrystyna soon got married, moved to Lviv with her husband, and gave birth to a daughter, Ksenia. While on maternity leave, she continued to make dolls. However, given the cost of materials, and the low price, the business was not profitable. *“I probably should have raised the price of the dolls, but I was afraid that no one would buy them, especially in these difficult times.”*

That’s how Khrystyna came to the WINGS project, as she understood that she needed business knowledge and skills.



Khrystyna Kushnir



Khrystyna's doll

CREATIVITY OR BUSINESS?



“The first thing I got from the Studio of Opportunities was the motivation to push for the thing I want to do in my life,” Khrystyna says. “No one has ever supported me like this before or told me that having a business that you feel passionate about is a great value. I also realized that a creative business should operate under the same laws as any other.”



Khrystyna started learning basic business skills. During the training, she finally calculated the cost of her dolls and identified what was missing to make the doll business profitable. All these calculations were included in the business plan, which Khrystyna successfully pitched to receive seed funding from the project for a sewing machine with an embroidery function, a professional glue pen, and a mini iron for doll clothes.

“The equipment came very handy!” Khrystyna says. “It allowed me to make dolls twice as fast, so I can take more orders.” After the project, the craftswoman raised the price of her products following her business plan, and sales not only did not decrease but increased.



DOLLS AND PEOPLE

Now Khrystyna makes two types of dolls, small ones up to 9 cm, which sell well as souvenirs, and larger ones up to 27 cm. All of them are unique and personalized. *“When I receive an order, I always carefully study the appearance, and ask about the person’s character,” Khrystyna says. “That’s why my dolls are images of the people who receive them.”*

After the WINGS project, Khrystyna not only managed to make a steady profit but is now taking steps to scale her business. She recently opened an online doll shop on one of Europe’s largest marketplaces for handmade products and has already received her first orders from abroad. She also has grand plans to set up a creative workshop and a store in Lviv with two other WINGS alumni. There, the craftswomen plan to hold master classes in puppetry, handmade decoration, and sewing of pouch bags, as well as organize an exhibition and sale.



Khrystyna's dolls



“This is one of the great results of the WINGS – a network of contacts of active women entrepreneurs and a network of like-minded people with whom you can develop and realize cool projects!” Khrystyna says. “I am extremely grateful to the project for the motivation and strength to follow my dreams and be successful.”



STORY 2. CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS. YULIIA KOTSAN AND ALISA YADELSKA FROM REMENIV, LVIV REGION

NEWTON'S FIRST LAW



"A body continues to be in the state of rest or uniform motion along a straight line unless it is acted upon by an external force to change its state."



Alisa Yadelska



Yuliia Kotsan

They lived on neighboring streets in the village of Remeniv. They even knew each other somewhat through their peers. But each went her way, not realizing how much they had in common.

YULIIA

Yulia graduated with honors from the Physics and Mathematics Department of Lviv University, but for a long time, she worked as a manager in a travel company. When she was on maternity leave with her younger daughter, she started preparing her older daughter for school. She told her interesting things about mathematics and physics in simple language. The child liked these sessions so much that Yuliia had the idea to set up a learning centre where children would be taught math and the basics of science in an simple and accessible way. *"That's right, children can be inspired to learn and explore the world from an early age,"* Yuliia says.

ALISA

Alisa was supposed to return to work at a bank after her maternity leave, but she could not enroll her daughter in day care due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of openings in the village kindergarten. There weren't other options for educating and developing children in the village. So Alisa started giving free classes in the village library for local children and her daughter. The children drew, sang, danced, and developed their motor skills. *"I have always loved working with children and studying different teaching methods. And now I have found*

something for my soul!” Alisa says. She was really not keen on banking.

TEACHING AS A BUSINESS

In 2021, both women enrolled in the WINGS project, though in different groups. Yuliia was so inspired and motivated that she successfully completed the training, developed a business plan, received seed funding, and purchased an interactive whiteboard and printer. During the WINGS project, she was able to open her first child development center in Lviv.

Alisa also developed a business project for a child development center. With project seed funding, she purchased a TV, a printer, and some furniture. The Village Council in Remeniv provided free premises to Alisa and she was going to launch the center soon.

But the full-scale invasion ruined all of their plans. Alisa had to suspend her business, and Yulia was forced to close her center in Lviv.



Even the youngest ones enjoy learning math with Yuliia

LIFE-SAVING COLLABORATION

A few months later, Yulia and Alisa met at one of the WINGS’ networking events.



“I attended the event because I needed support and hoped that I could resume my business,” Alisa says. “I saw that there were women who continued to run their businesses despite the war.”



Alisa had an idea when she saw Yuliia was sitting next to her. She realized that they were both from Remeniv and worked in the same sector, so they could join efforts. And the double energy made a difference! The women reassembled their equipment, renegotiated the premises with the Village Council, and launched a joint development center for children.



Developmental exercises from Alisa

Now there are three groups of kids of various ages in their center. Alisa plays educational games with them and does exercises and fun activities, and Yuliia teaches them math in a fun way. She also runs a math club and individual online classes. When the war is over, Yuliia dreams of developing an online math platform for teenagers and setting up a network of math clubs. Alisa wants to scale up her development center for toddlers. The partners do not know whether they will be able to combine these ideas into one project, but they hold on tight to each other now, finding strength and support in their union.

STORY 3. EMPLOYMENT. MYROSLAVA MALYNCHAK FROM ZOLOCHIV, LVIV REGION

CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE

HOW TO MAKE A CAREER LEAP AFTER A LONG BREAK

When Myroslava first attended a WINGS session in October 2022, she could hardly introduce herself. She felt so shy, insecure and confused. *“As usual, I wore dark clothes, sat in a corner and started listening to the stories of other women. But I wanted to speak out,”* she says.

WITHIN FOUR WALLS

Myroslava has been shy since childhood. She spent a lot of time in hospitals due to her asthma, which was diagnosed in her teens, and this certainly did not help her socialization. On her parents' advice, she chose a “quiet” profession – a landscape designer, and for some time she worked as a landscaping specialist in the local housing office. Later, she married, gave birth to a son, and, as she says, *“went on maternity leave for 6 years.”*

“I wanted to work, but my husband was against it. He said he earns good money and my job is to take care of our family,” says Myroslava. *“Gradually, I locked myself into the four walls, and stopped wearing bright clothes – what’s the point when you hardly ever leave the house? I started to think that work and career were not for me.”* Then her husband started having problems with his job. Myroslava was financially dependent on him and decided to look for a job, but at the same time, she didn’t dare because she was afraid of rejection.

Myroslava’s cousin worried about her emotional state and said: *“You need to join WINGS – there are wise people who will help you.”* Just before that, her cousin, a graphic designer, graduated from WINGS and was enthusiastic about developing her own business.

NEED FOR CHANGE

So, Myroslava joined the project, following her cousin’s advice. At the end of the first session of the Studio of Opportunities, unexpectedly for herself, she spoke out about her worries. *“There was such an atmosphere of support and understanding that it just happened naturally,”* she admits. She looked forward to the next meeting.



Myroslava Malynchak



“At WINGS I asked myself: Do I want to live my life as I live it now? No! So, I have to change.”



Together with the other participants, Myroslava engaged in the Studio of Opportunities sessions and learned how to set goals, plan steps to achieve them and apply time management.



“Affirmations helped me the most. Every day I stood in front of the mirror and repeated that I was strong, I could do it, I would succeed. And I started to feel much more confident and stronger!” She realized this when she wanted to wear a bright dress to one of her sessions.



Myroslava with other WINGS participants and local coordinator

After the Studio of Opportunities, Myroslava attended employability skills building training.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

By the end of the project, Myroslava heard from a friend about a vacancy for an administrator at a catering establishment and decided to try it out. *“I didn’t have much hope for success, because it was a responsible position,”* she says. *“But I prepared carefully.”* During the interview, the owner asked her what her first steps as an administrator would be, and when she laid out a whole plan for the development of the establishment, including a new design, he was impressed. A few days later, Myroslava started work.



“Sometimes it was very difficult,” says Myroslava. *“Because it was a new area for me. But I felt strong enough to cope with the difficulties after WINGS.”*



In eight months of work, she has assembled a new team – today she has 18 employees under her supervision – updated the menu and opened a summer terrace. The restaurant was recently recognized as one of the most popular in the city by the local newspaper.

“I love my job!” says Myroslava. *“As it turned out, I like communicating with people and being in the thick of things. I wish I had realized this earlier.”* She is especially happy that she has become financially independent and is no longer scared of being dependent on her husband’s income. Their family relationship also improved. *“As soon as I became more confident, he started listening to me, respecting my decisions.”*



“My life has changed a lot – and WINGS pushed this change! Now I know that a woman can do much more than she thinks she can or someone else thinks she can.”



STORY 4. PETRYKIVKA PAINTINGS. ANASTASIYA MOVCHAN FROM BLYZNIUKY, KHARKIV REGION

TO PAINT THE FUTURE

HOW TO DEVELOP A BUSINESS BASED ON ARTISTIC PAINTING

Anastasiya already had her train and bus tickets in hand. She was going to work in Poland. God knew for how long. *“I was so reluctant to leave my husband and parents,”* she recalls. *“But there was no other option.”* It was November 2022, the tenth month of the full-scale war. The art school in Blyzniuky, where Anastasiya taught drawing, closed. Her products with Petrykivka paintings didn’t sell well. Her husband’s salary was not enough to keep the whole family. So, she had to pack her bags.

But the day before her travel, Anastasiya received a call from a friend who told her about the WINGS project. *“I don’t know why, but I immediately thought that it was a sign, and I should stay and try to get my life back here, at home.”*

A STUDIO, BUT NOT AN ARTISTIC ONE

Anastasiya returned the tickets and in a few days came to the first session of the Studio of Opportunities. *“We didn’t start with a business topic and that surprised me,”* Anastasiya says.



“During the Studio of Opportunities, we learned how to get to know ourselves and discover our talents and capabilities, how to allocate internal resources, and even how to say no to events and people that are of no interest to us.” She says that this psychological approach worked. *“I calmed down a bit and started making plans.”*



Anastasiya Movchan



Anastasiya at the Studio of Opportunities

When it came to pitching her business idea, Anastasiya presented the studio project. But it was a studio for... skin care. *“I remember how our coordinator asked me, ‘But you are an artist, Anastasiya! Are you sure you want to do this?’”*

Anastasiya wasn’t sure at all. For as long as she can remember, she has always loved to paint. Anastasiya graduated from an art studio at a church school and then received a diploma in fine arts. She enjoyed working with children at a local art school. At the same time, she was painting wooden items in the Petrykivka style, including household items and kitchen utensils. Sometimes they were sold or made to order. *“But I have never considered my hobby as a profitable business,”* Anastasiya says. When the war started, people were not

interested in these types of products. *“So I thought that maybe a body care studio would be more in demand.”*

CREATIVE CHALLENGE

Eventually, after individual consultations with her WINGS coordinator, Anastasiia decided to follow her heart and try to develop a business out of her hobby.



“Being in the WINGS project, I realized that I wanted to popularize Petrykivka painting and make a business of it.”



This is how a new business plan came about to produce and sell painted items and eventually open an art studio. Anastasiia successfully pitched her business plan and received seed funding for materials she needed for the production.

WORK WITH PERSPECTIVE

After the project, she began to expand her range of products with a focus on practical use. She increased the number of kitchen utensils she offered and also launched a line of jewelry boxes, hairbrushes, and hairpins. She began to actively promote her products through social media.



“I stopped being shy about offering my services, doing posts, and showcasing my work.”



Her orders dramatically increased. With support from the WINGS project, in August and September 2023, Anastasiia took part in the “Vsi. Svoi” market in Kyiv (a marketplace that sells only Ukrainian-made products). *“It was a great experience in learning how to present and sell a product to a wide audience.”*

Anastasiia says that after WINGS, she gained a lot of strength and inspiration and became more active in the local Blyzniuky community. She painted a wall in a village school and a memorial to fallen soldiers in another village. She also helps local volunteers raise money for camouflage materials



Anastasiia at work



Anastasiia at the Vsi.Svoyi market



One of Anastasiia's paintings

by painting shell tubes. Anastasiia also received an offer to paint used shell tubes and send these works to auctions in Poland and France.

Anastasiia managed to negotiate with the Village Council to allocate space for an art studio, where she plans not only to teach children but also to conduct art therapy for adults, including veterans and IDPs.

Recently, the Village Council won a tender from one of the international funds for community development, and part of the funds has been used to repair and equip Anastasiia's studio. The studio has now opened.

"Now I bless the chance that WINGS gave me, and I didn't flee from the country," Anastasiia says.



Anastasiia's products



"WINGS has taught me not to give up and keep going to achieve my goals."



STORY 5. DAIRY FARM. OKSANA MAKOVCHYK FROM NOVA VODOLAH, KHARKIV REGION

A PATH TO SUCCESS WITH DAIRY

HOW TO MAKE A DAIRY MINI FARM PROFITABLE

Oksana Makovchyk from Nova Vodolaha, Kharkiv region, is a mother of six children – four boys and two girls. She also owns a mini farm that produces a variety of dairy products. Once, she could only dream of running her own business.

FOR THE SAKE OF CHILDREN

In her senior year, Oksana fell in love and married as soon as she graduated from high school. She gave birth to her children. Despite her dream of studying and starting a profession, she had to take care of her kids first and foremost.

Then there was a painful divorce from her husband, and a long period when she was raising her children alone and barely making ends meet. Keeping the household was the only thing that kept her alive. Fortunately, Oksana later met her current husband, Mykola, got married for the second time



Oksana Makovchyk

and gave birth to her youngest son, Petro. The family became even larger, so she had to think about livelihood options. Oksana came up with the idea to make dairy products, as she knew how to take care of cows and make basic products from milk since childhood.

She and her husband bought three cows. In addition to milk, they made butter, sour cream, and cheese. They tried to sell products, but the money they earned was only enough to cover the cost of keeping the cows. *“I realized that we needed to approach it differently, but I didn’t know how,”* Oksana says.

And then the full-scale war broke out. Oksana’s middle son, Pavlo, went to war. She was distraught and stopped selling dairy products. Instead, she delivered milk and cheese to a nearby unit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

LIFE-SAVING TRAINING

One day, Oksana saw an announcement about the WINGS project on social media. She signed in for the first project session, in the hope of distracting herself for a while. While talking to the coordinator and other women participants, she felt inspiration and a desire to move forward. She did not miss a single class, and each time she became more and more confident. As she mastered her new knowledge, she knew she could run her own business.

The WINGS project helped her to figure out how to organize the business to make it profitable – to increase the range of her products, automate production, and introduce business planning. The last step was to develop a business plan. Oksana was hesitant to do this because she had never done it before.

“After all, my husband literally sat me down at the table and said, ‘Write!’ and then my daughter helped me type it on the computer,” Oksana says. Together with the trainers, she finalized a business plan, and to her surprise, Oksana received seed funding. This is how the farm got a very necessary item – a dry milking machine, which allowed them to immediately optimize their milk yield.

“It’s amazing!” Oksana says. *“This machine does everything as well as if it were done by hand, it squeezes out every drop, and I can use this time to make other products.”*



Oksana and her cow



Oksana’s cheese

Oksana had so much energy and new ideas that she added fermented baked milk, Adygei cheese, and bryndza to her line of dairy products. She and her husband also bought an autoclave and started making condensed milk. Oksana set up pages on social media, and her customers doubled.

SMART PLANNING

Based on knowledge she gained through the project, she and her husband reinvested their first profit in expanding production and bought four more cows. Today, Oksana has seven cows on her farm.

In March 2023, at a networking event organized by the WINGS project, she met another alumna of the project who is engaged in craft cheese making. The women agreed that in the winter months, when milk is usually scarce, Oksana would supply it for cheese production. Oksana sees such an organized supply of production facilities as one of the ways to develop her business. She also plans to open a store and purchase a vacuum sealing machine to deliver her products throughout Ukraine.



“Today, more than ever, I feel the ground under my feet, my mini farm is working well,” Oksana says. “But the main thing is that I believed in myself and I’m not going to doubt anymore! I sincerely thank WINGS for all these changes in my life.”



STORY 6. CREATIVE WORKSHOP FOR CHILDREN. VICTORIIA HAVRYLENKO FROM RZHYSHCHIV, KYIV REGION

POTTERY CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

HOW AN IDP FROM DONETSK CREATED A SUCCESSFUL CREATIVE WORKSHOP FOR CHILDREN

What did bus conductor Victoria Havrylenko think when a Russian militant pulled a gun on her? Perhaps not what you would expect: She thought about all of the beaded jewelry she hadn’t yet finished, and how there was so much more she wanted to create.

It was 2014, in the war zone in the East of Ukraine. She and her colleagues from the bus company were voluntarily evacuating people. Despite the danger, Victoria started talking to the militants and somehow convinced them to let the buses pass. *“After that day, I finally accepted I would have to flee my hometown,”* she recalls.



Victoriia Havrylenko at the WINGS cross-regional event, March 2024

EVERYTHING FROM SCRATCH

Thus, Victoria from Donetsk and her husband ended up first in Kyiv and then in Rzhyshev, Kyiv region, where they got a room in a dormitory. They began to build their lives anew in this small town, and her two sons were born here. Later, Victoria got a job as a kindergarten teacher; she is a psychologist by education. She was happy to start working with children, making various crafts, sculpting, beading! After all, she has been fond of handicrafts since childhood and has mastered many styles and techniques. She has also always enjoyed working with and teaching children.

In February 2022, the full-scale war began. The kindergarten closed, and the children were at home. Six months later, Victoria couldn't take it anymore. *"I called the parents and told them, 'Bring them! We can't deprive children of leisure time!'"*

At first, she held master classes in her apartment. Then one of the mothers arranged for a room in a building on the outskirts of the town, where Victoria and her husband made minor repairs and heated and furnished it. Several groups of children attended the classes. The kids made beaded jewelry, poured candles, and felted toys and books. *"In addition to the fact that creativity comforts children, we made crafts so that the child could play with them or use them in everyday life,"* Victoria explains.

SAVE THE CASE

Victoria's master classes were becoming more and more popular in the city, but they didn't bring in any income. At first, Victoria conducted them for free, then for a purely symbolic fee. Moreover, she purchased all the materials herself. *"Six months later, I was completely in the red, and I didn't know what to do with it."*

When Victoria joined the WINGS project on the advice of her friend, she admitted that she had almost decided to quit her favorite job. *"I remember how our coordinator Svitlana told me, 'Don't rush! You haven't done anything to save it yet!' She was right."*

During the project, with the support from the trainers, Victoria tried to consider her studio as a business project and came to the idea that she needed to expand her services. That's how the idea of a pottery workshop came about, where children could be taught, and pottery could be made for sale. Then Victoria developed a business plan. *"At first it was a real poem!"* she



Victoria's master classes

laughs, “because it was the first time I had ever done it. I had to redo it several times.” But the most valuable thing at WINGS, Victoria says, was the psychological support.

“Our coordinators taught me not to give up and to look for a way out of any situation.” When Victoria successfully pitched her business plan, she burst into tears.



“I have regained confidence that I can continue to do what I love!”



COURAGE TO ACT

Many women strive to start their own businesses, especially during the full-scale war. Due to limited resources, the project cannot support all business ideas. At the same time, both Pact and our implementing partner organizations are looking for opportunities to raise additional funds to provide seed funding to as many WINGS alumni as possible. Thus, Victoria received funding for the purchase of a potter's wheel with funds from the All-Ukrainian Charitable Organization *Convictus Ukraine*. Now she and her kids are learning the secrets of pottery and expanding their range of products.

As Victoria says, after WINGS, she became bolder in her dreams and plans. She decided to set up an art center for children and women in Rzhyshev. She applied to three international organizations and won all three grants. Now there is a muffle furnace for processing clay products, beading machines, and a multimedia projector for master classes in Victoria's center.



Victoria at the Vsi.Svoyi market



“It's like a white line in my life has begun with WINGS,” she says. “And now I say to all women who want to do their own thing: Go to WINGS! There you will be given great support and a boost for development!”



STORY 7. SOLID SHAMPOOS, HAIR AND BODY CARE PRODUCTS. LIUDMYLA PRYKHODKO FROM HLOBYNO, POLTAVA REGION

FACTORY OF CARE

HOW TO LAUNCH A HAIR AND SKIN CARE BUSINESS FROM SCRATCH

Today, a true laboratory operates in Lyudmyla Prykhodko's house. Oils are heated in a water bath, waxes are melted, bars of solid shampoo are dried, and various mixtures and hydrolats are waiting in the refrigerator for further use. All family members are involved in the process. In turn, Liudmyla is happy to be doing what she loves to do and to be able to support her family.

A HINT FROM NATURE

A year and a half ago, none of this existed. There was only anxiety and fear. In February 2022, Liudmyla resigned as a clerk at a notary's office, in hopes of finding a better-paying job. But two weeks later, a full-scale war broke out. Constant stress caused hair loss. No medications helped. One day, she recalled how her mother rinsed her hair with nettle broth when she was a child. Liudmyla started doing the same, and within a few weeks, her hair became strong and shiny. She began to learn how to make natural hair care products on her own. She became interested in solid shampoos, a mixture of natural detergent components, oils, and plant extracts. The process of creating was so exciting! However, there was a problem – the ingredients for such a shampoo were expensive. Her husband suggested she produce shampoos not only for herself but also for sale. *"It was already looking like a small business, but I had no idea how to organize it,"* Liudmyla says.

MOTIVATION AND PUSH

One of her friends, a WINGS graduate, told her about the project. *"I didn't expect it to be of any use. But I signed in out of curiosity,"* Liudmyla says. She found the project sessions so interesting that she was soon counting the days until the next meeting. Thanks to the Studio of Opportunities, Liudmyla has regained faith in herself and her abilities. *"I especially liked the atmosphere created by our coordinators. Each participant was treated*



Liudmyla Prykhodko



Liudmyla at the WINGS cross-regional event.
March 2024

with attention and care,” Liudmyla says. “Maybe that’s why the girls and I became such good friends and motivators for each other.”

Then she learned how a business works and how to make it profitable through the project’s basic business skills training. Liudmyla realized that for her business to become profitable, she needed to increase the range and sales of her products. So, she developed a business plan, successfully presented it, and received seed funding from WINGS to purchase a gas stove to heat the oils even during power outages, a special cabinet for drying the products, and a showcase for presenting her products in stores or beauty salons.

She now had the necessary equipment, and her parents and husband helped with purchasing raw materials. The process was underway! Liudmyla produced the first series of solid shampoos and several types of natural soap. Her first customers were peers from WINGS. Thanks to the project’s network of alumni across Ukraine and word of mouth, Liudmyla expanded her customer base. *“Of course, I care a lot about the quality of my products. For example, ordinary hair products contain mainly detergent components and only 1-2 percent nutrients, while my solid shampoos contain 10 percent natural oils and another 10 percent herbal hydrolats,”* Liudmyla says.



Liudmyla's products

PEER'S NETWORK

Liudmyla continues to keep in touch with the coordinators and WINGS graduates.



“I think WINGS is a unique project that takes care of us, the graduates, even after graduation.”



Liudmyla attended a networking event in Poltava, where she presented her products. With the support of the project, she also took part in the “Vsi. Svoi” market in Kyiv, where she not only sold her products but also actively networked with other women entrepreneurs. *“I brought back so many new ideas on how to develop my business!”* she says.

Today, Liudmyla’s home factory produces 10 types of solid shampoos, oils and hair masks, as well as several types of soap, body cream, and lip balms.



Liudmyla at the Vsi.Svoyi market

Her plans include the development of new formulas and new lines of natural products, as well as the development of a website.



“Recently I was told, ‘You started a business out of nothing!’ And I say, ‘It’s not out of nothing! My business was born out of my work and thanks to the support of the WINGS.’”



2023



STORY 8. POSTCARDS. KATERYNA HILINICH FROM BILA TSERKVA, KYIV REGION

“MY BEST WISHES, KATYA”

“AIR RAID ALERT IN THE HEART”

In June 2022, when Kateryna Hilinich first met with a WINGS project coordinator, she felt desolate and devastated. Six months of war, the shelling of her native city of Bila Tserkva, difficulties with earning a living, feeling anxious for her child who needed constant medical supervision. She kept everything to herself, because who do you complain to when the situation is hard for everyone?

But she suddenly opened up at the meeting.



“I thought we were going to talk about business, but we talked about me, about what my life is like now, and about what I feel.”



Katya is not accustomed to talking about herself and her wishes.

Since childhood, she loved to draw, but her parents did not share her enthusiasm. “*Have fun while you can and then you’ll go study for a ‘normal’ profession,*” her father said. To please her parents, Katya earned a diploma in economics. She got married and had a daughter, Mariyka. While on maternity leave, Katya tried to come back to what she loved doing the most. She took courses in graphic design and even got a job at a printing firm. But sudden news in the doctor’s office disrupted all plans.

“A LOVING HEART IS THE STRONGEST WARRIOR”

Her daughter was given a devastating diagnosis. She underwent a difficult surgery and a long recovery period, bedridden for several months. Massages, procedures – all followed by another relapse. All that lasted for six years.

She and her husband broke up, and Katya had nobody to rely on. “*At times, I totally lost my heart,*” says Katya.



“But I knew that I had to fight for my child to live.”



Kateryna Hilinich



Katya and her daughter

Going to work was out of the question, because her daughter needed constant care. Katya moonlighted, doing freelance jobs. She took on any kind of assignments – from processing photos to drawing furniture assembly diagrams. All the money was spent on treatment.

Only sometimes did she allow herself to do something for herself: She drew small cards with special inscriptions. *“I wanted it to be simple words and pictures that would perk people’s mood, such as ‘Good morning!’, ‘I love you!’, ‘I’m sorry!’”* Those could not be found in stores, and very soon, through word of mouth, Katya began to receive orders for her postcards. She printed small batches in a printing shop and treated them like a hobby, because they did not bring any income.

Katya’s perseverance helped her daughter’s illness recede, and Katya began to dream about a more creative occupation for herself.

But then war broke out.

All earnings stopped. Katya and her daughter could not relocate to a safer place, because the child had to stay under medical supervision.

“WITH YOU I FEEL PEACE IN THE TIME OF WAR”

When Katya saw the announcement about the WINGS project, she was totally confused, she simply did not know how to survive. But she felt better after the first meeting. *“Our coordinator Yulia listened to me very attentively. She asked questions about my dreams and wishes. At each session, I saw how other women’s eyes began to shine!”*

During the Studio of Opportunities sessions, Katya learned to set goals and to persistently reach them, and also – something that helped her a lot – to report to her group mates. *“It was an incredible atmosphere of female support and friendship that I had never experienced before.”*

Next was a business training in Kyiv, where, with the help of her trainers, Katya made a simple discovery. As it turns out, it is possible to have a creative hobby and grow it into a profitable business, even under the conditions of war.

Sitting with her daughter in the hallway during air raid alarm periods, she worked on her business plan. She successfully pitched it and won funding from WINGS to buy equipment.



Katya's postcards

That was how Katya got a colour printer, and then a cutter, which she had dreamed of for a long time.

Now her apartment houses a real “home-based publishing house,” as her daughter says. With her work – sketches, layout, printing – taking place at home, Katya can be close to her child.

In recent months, Katya managed to increase her output several times and established cooperation with flower and gift shops. Through her pages on social media, which her daughter helps with, she now has customers for her postcards from all over the country.



“I could never imagine that I could mass-produce my postcards and make a profit.”



Katya plans to scale up her business and create a specialized website.

“A BIG CONFESSION IN A SMALL CARD”

Recently, Katya released a new series of postcards about Ukraine. *“I wanted to find words and images that would inspire and support people.”* Together with her daughter, she takes some of those cards to our defenders who are in hospitals, and distributes some at volunteer centers.



“Thanks to the WINGS project, I know how inspiring support is. Apart from practical skills, I probably got something that is even more important – faith in my strength and in things that I like doing best.”



STORY 9. PRODUCTION OF FERMENTED TEAS. LYUBOV USYK FROM BARYSHIVKA, KYIV REGION

TEA FOR SON

BITTER WORMWOOD

Lyubov Usyk has always loved trees, plants, and flowers. She worked as a metal cutting technologist, but what she did for pleasure was gardening. Cherry trees, apple trees, nice flower garden in front of her house, with her favourite marigolds, hyacinths and tulips. Her children, two daughters and a son, happily helped their mother take care of the plants. Especially her youngest child, son Ihor. He was her helper like nobody else.



Lyubov Usyk

When Ihor turned 18 and volunteered to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine, it was only in her garden where Lyubov could quell her worries, even just a little...

May 4, 2018, became the darkest day for Lyubov. She received news that her beloved son Ihor, who was 21, was killed in action in the east of Ukraine.

Everything seemed to have lost any sense, both her job and her garden that she used to love so much. The years that passed brought no consolation to Lyubov.

WILLOWHERB AND HEATHER

One day, her husband brought her a magazine that had an article on fermented tea, because she used to love reading about plants. The article was dedicated to a special method of making herbal tea, which involved fermentation. Lyubov agreed to give it a try. First, she made a drink from willowherb, then from heather and wild strawberries. The first batch the family gave to their son's brothers-in-arms, who came to visit on the anniversary of Ihor's deaths, in his memory. Lyubov did not even expect that they would like that tea so much! After that, the word began spreading, and the first customers began to appear. However, Lyubov did not consider tea making as a business idea.



Tasting Lyubov's fermented teas

YOUNG CHERRY LEAVES

One of the connoisseurs of Lyubov's teas told her about the WINGS project. *"I made an effort and forced myself to go,"* Lyubov recalls. *"I was like a clamshell – closed and silent."* But coordinator Liliya found an approach. *"She told me: you must live and move on! She kept prodding me all the time!"* Eventually, Lyubov began to live.

She began to think of new teas – from young leaves of cherries and raspberries, from cornflower and marigold petals. Her husband could not get raw materials for her fast enough! Lyubov pitched her business plan and received funding for a greenhouse provided by the project. Now the couple grows plants right at their household and controls their quality.



"WINGS gave me such a strong impetus that I now run without ever stopping."



A year after the project, Lyubov and her husband offer 16 kinds of teas to their customers. They developed a brand and established delivery services of their products to coffee shops in Baryshivka and Kyiv. At present, they are working on new types of teas with dried berries. They also develop a website to launch internet sales.



Lyubov Usyk's range of teas

THE MARIGOLDS

While in the project, Lyubov was inspired by how project coordinators manage to find an approach and establish trustworthy relationships with each participant.

After the full-scale war broke out, Lyubov began active volunteer work; at present, she heads the Centre for assistance to families of the KIA and POW in Baryshivka.

Also, she and her husband keep sending large batches of teas to Ukrainian defenders at the frontline. What is especially popular there are mint and marigold - which Lyubov grows in her garden.



“Now I know what I live and work for. And I know that my son stands behind me, supporting me in everything I do.”



STORY 10. MAMARADA EMBROIDERY AND SEWING WORKSHOP. VIRA SOPELNYK FROM BILA TSERKVA, KYIV REGION

BE BRAVE LIKE UKRAINIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

STOLEN LIFE

After the war started in 2014, Vira Sopelnyk, her husband and two daughters were forced to flee Horlivka (Donetsk region). Vira's youngest daughter was only 3 months old and the family had just renovated their apartment.

“Armed russian soldiers came and took my home. We left everything – our home, our work, our comfortable life,” – Vira said.

The family moved to Ternopil in western Ukraine but later settled down in Bila Tserkva (Kyiv region). While on maternity leave, Vira sewed toys and embroidered clothes for relatives, friends and acquaintances. Later, Vira decided to open her own small embroidery and sewing workshop. Vira united talented women with small children, who had no jobs but had skills and desire to create. The name of the workshop was chosen quickly – Mamarada (MummyHappy).

“When I was little, I caught a butterfly and held it in my closed palms. Then I asked my mother: ‘Tell me,



Vira Sopelnyk

is the butterfly in my palms alive or dead?’ Mom answered that everything is in my hands! I opened my palms and the butterfly flew away, but the words stayed with me for my life. When I grew up and went through hard times, I was constantly doing something with my own hands,” Vira says about her love for sewing and embroidery.

BUSINESS MODEL VALIDATION PROGRAM

To grow her business, Vira needed more business skills and more funding to purchase sewing materials. She received access to both, thanks to the WINGS project.

Partnerships with other participants were born during the training, too. Natalia, an owner of a pizzeria in Kamianka-Buzka in the Lviv region, and Neonila, a co-founder of a honey workshop in Rzhyshchiv in the Kyiv region, have already received sewed aprons and hats for their businesses from Mamarada. They plan to collaborate further. Vira also created special aprons for representatives of the Government of Canada who came with an official visit to Lviv. “Be brave like Ukrainian women entrepreneurs” tells the caption embroidered on the aprons.



Vira and her partner Hanna. BMV training, July 2022



STORY 11. 1001 ELEPHANTS TOY WORKSHOP. NATALIA CHUKHIL FROM LVIV

THE WINGS PROJECT HELPED ME REALIZE WHAT I WANT FROM LIFE. IT BECAME A STARTING POINT

LONG-STANDING PASSION

After the war began in 2014, Natalia Chukhil had to move from Donetsk to Mariupol. To take her mind off sad thoughts, she attended a master class on the making of soft toys. A baby elephant was the first toy she made with her own hands. She made more baby elephants. That gave a name to her workshop – 1001 Elephants.

Eventually, Natalia relocated to Lviv. She was working in executive positions in financial and economic departments of large Ukrainian companies for many years. For a long time, toy making was an occupation that helped her relieve stress in the evening after work and use her creativity. She gifted her toys to her relatives, friends and acquaintances.

After the start of the full-scale war in 2022, the continuous, heavy burden, overtime work and stress forced Natalia to quit her job. She registered with an employment center, which recommended she join the WINGS project. In time, her uncertainty and fear gave way to confidence.

CHANGES IN HERSELF

“The project sessions, particularly the Studio of Opportunities program, were just what we needed then. We all came to the project perplexed, not knowing what to do. WINGS turned me to myself, to my own inner feelings. I realized that my universe begins from myself. I was eagerly waiting for every session because they filled us with inspiration and enthusiasm. You realize that you are not alone, that you have a community of like-minded women,” Natalia says.

Natalia says she has experienced significant change. She treats herself and her life differently, and has become calmer. She has begun to see challenges not as a problem but as interesting missions. She has learned to take care of herself.

FROM A PASSION TO A BUSINESS

After Studio of Opportunities, Natalia attended basic business skills training.



Natalia at the cross-regional event, organized by Pact. March 2023.



Natalia's toys



“WINGS helped me gather up all my knowledge, wrap it in one package, structure and systematize it.”



Thanks to the project, Natalia received seed funding for an overlock machine. It will help her make seams tidier and allow her to broaden the range of the products she makes in the future.

Natalia is now successfully selling her toys abroad through social media and a craft product sale service.

She continues to take part in WINGS, serving as an inspiring example for other women.



Natalia Chukhil, December 2022

STORY 12. KLYOSH CONFECTIONERY. OLHA LIAMENOVSKA FROM ZOLOCHIV, LVIV REGION

MY BUSINESS GIVES ME A DESIRE AND STRENGTH TO SMILE AGAINST ALL ODDS

THE PASSION EMERGES

Olha Liamentovska studied finance when she was younger, but it wasn't work that she enjoyed. While on maternity leave, she decided not to return to a job she didn't like. But what would she do instead? She had few ideas and little confidence. After having children, Olha thought a lot about what they would eat, especially desserts. She wanted healthy options with quality ingredients and no additives. Cooking healthy desserts became her passion.

Little by little, the family kitchen began to transform into a creative workshop, though a small one. Her husband and friends started presenting her with first bakery appliances.

Her desserts were becoming more delicious, and acquaintances began asking her to bake for their children. Olha started thinking that she could make money selling confectionery products, yet she was embarrassed to share such thoughts.



Olha with Klyosh dessert vases

A WAY TO THE DREAM

The WINGS project changed everything. A friend advised her to join the project's Studio of Opportunities program. It turned out to be an important step to realizing her dream. She learned to set goals and work toward them, and making a living doing what she loved started to seem possible. She began making desserts and pastries to order, her small kitchen filled with desserts and cakes. See how serious Olha was, her husband's support grew.

Olha realized that she needs more resources to build her business. WINGS helped her again. After Studio of Opportunities, she completed basic business skills training.

FAMILY BUSINESS

"This training particularly impressed me," Olha says.

"Before, I had no idea what a customer base was, how to form it, how to build communication with customers. Or how to calculate and plan costs or mitigate risks. I learned all of that at the training. And it was learning that pushed me to learn more."

After the training, Olha developed a business plan and was chosen by WINGS for funding for a dessert refrigerator.

Olha's husband was inspired by her success. Together they rented a space and transformed it into a confectionery shop. They plan to create new desserts, reach new production volumes and offer master classes. They named their business Klyosh, a Ukrainian word for a small dessert vase.

THE WAR

When the full-scale war began, Olha and her husband put their business on hold and even thought about closing it. Yet life goes on, and they kept Klyosh open, though somewhat transformed.

Before the war, they took many orders well in advance for large events like weddings. Business has slowed and has become more spontaneous. Olha learned to be ready to cook desserts "today for tomorrow." She started receiving more orders for children's parties. During the war, adults have become more appreciative of children's joy.



Deliciously macarons are Olha's favorite dessert



"This business gives a reason and strength to smile, even if missiles are attacking our cities."



STORY 13. BICYCLE REPAIR SHOP. IRYNA MASYUK FROM THE VILLAGE OF YARESKY, POLTAVA REGION

A FAMILY BUSINESS WAS OUR DREAM, AND NOW IT'S A REALITY

NEW LIFE – NEW OPPORTUNITIES

On February 24, 2022, at 4 a.m., Iryna Masyuk and her family watched the blaze of explosions from the windows of their home in Kharkiv. Some days later, two enemy shells fell in their back yard. Fearing that they may end up under enemy occupation, Iryna and her family were forced to flee and go to their relatives in Yaresky, Poltava region.

While in Kharkiv, Iryna worked as a cafe manager, but in Yaresky, finding a job in that field was impossible. She tried to get hired as a store assistant in the nearby town of Shyshaky, but she had to abandon that plan because the bus transportation service was very limited. Iryna is not a person who just sits on her hands, so when she learned about the WINGS Studio of Opportunities program, she decided to give it a try. She needed emotional recovery, and she also had a strong desire to grow.

The Studio helped Iryna realize that a lot of things in her life depended on herself.



Iryna Masyuk



“At the Studio of Opportunities I found support, I learned to believe in myself, in my own strengths. My faith in people got stronger.”



After the Studio sessions, Iryna decided to attend a training on basic business skills, because she had long been thinking about a family business. But she did not know how to approach it or where to start. The training helped her understand what to do and how to correctly take risks into account, calculate costs and revenues, and promote her services and attract customers.



“Before, I had no idea what it meant to run your own business. Now, thanks to WINGS, I understand, I know, and I am able.”



Iryna and her bicycle repair shop

AN IDEA FOR A BUSINESS

Iryna came up with the idea of a bicycle repair shop while still in the project. She saw that people in the village used bicycles a lot because other means of transportation were either absent or inconvenient, and fuel is costly. Iryna's family even bought a couple of used bicycles for themselves, because new ones got quite a bit more expensive. At the same time, used bikes need repair and maintenance.

When Iryna and her family evacuated from Kharkiv, they managed to take along a welding machine and some tools such as wrenches and screwdrivers.

Her husband repaired a bicycle for his own use, and made a special tricycle for her disabled mother. Their neighbours and other people in the village watched them, and then began asking to have their bicycles repaired, too. Iryna's husband also helped them. Iryna believed that repairing, maintaining, and converting bicycles could become her future family business, because that kind of service was non-existent both in her village and in neighbouring villages.



Iryna and her new equipment

Having calculated everything, as she was taught at the training, Iryna wrote a business plan, realized that her idea would pay off, and won funding from the project to buy a compressor to inflate tires and do paint jobs.

Iryna decided to take on the tasks of communication with clients, advertising for the services, and simple technical work. Complex technical operations are carried out by her husband and son, who have the necessary experience. A family business had long been their dream, and now that dream was coming true.

"I am not only grateful for the funding. Above all, I am grateful for the support and for the new knowledge," Iryna says. "I know that we will continue to work for the prosperity of our country. Everything depends on ourselves!"

STORY 14. GOOSE FARMING. NATALIYA MYRNA FROM SHYSHAKI, POLTAVA REGION

NOW EVERYTHING – BOTH SUCCESSES AND FAILURES – DEPENDS SOLELY ON MYSELF

RELYING ON AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Nataliia worked at a rayon state administration. She lost her job in 2021 due to redundancy. It was hard to find a job in the community, and the problem of supporting her family soon became acute. Sometime later, Nataliia learned about the WINGS project from social media and decided to join, hoping it could open new prospects and opportunities.

That's exactly what happened. The Studio of Opportunities sessions and new acquaintances and friends gave her confidence in herself and in her abilities. The project

taught her not to be afraid of failure because it can be turned into important experience.



“The support provided by the WINGS project is important to women, particularly to rural ones. It’s exactly what is necessary for self-realization and development.”



After completion of the Studio of Opportunities, Nataliia chose the entrepreneurship pathway. When she was thinking of what her business could be, the project coordinator’s advice came handy – to rely on available resources, to begin with what you already have.

When Nataliia joined the project, she had geese at her house that provided meat to her family and other relatives. Later, to extend the meat storage period, she started making canned stewed meat for herself and her relatives.

Nataliia listened to the coordinator’s advice. Thanks to training on basic business skills, she managed to calculate costs and possible revenue thoroughly, and realized that geese farming could be turned into her own business. She decided to make canned meat, vacuum-packed smoked meat, and melted goose fat and sell it in the Poltava region. Goose down blankets were another product.

Nataliia developed a business plan that was supported by the WINGS selection panel. With seed funding from the project, she purchased an autoclave and a vacuumizer.

LAUNCH DURING THE WAR

Launching a business at the start of the full-scale war was a challenge, but Nataliia succeeded, especially as her family supported and reassured her.



“Business is like a different planet. Everything should be tested and analyzed. At the same time, I am both a manager and a subordinate of my own, hence both successes and failures depend solely on me.”



Nataliia Myrna

As planned, Nataliia started making canned meat and vacuum-packed smoked meat. She sells the products via a wholesale buyer. It turned out to be very convenient because he already has his own customer base. Meanwhile, the goose down blankets are in great demand, also generating income.

“What I would really want is victory. All the rest depends on me,” Nataliia says.



Nataliia (in front of the WINGS banner). Cross-regional event, March 2023

STORY 15. GROWING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. OLHA ZAYETS FROM TOWN OF KOLOMAK, KHARKIV REGION

WHEN SHADBUSH BLOOMS

Shadbush is a small tree that has dark blue fruit. It is not very well known in Ukraine. But in Olha Zayets' garden, more than one of these trees grow. She loves them because they are low-maintenance, bloom profusely in the spring, and produce a generous amount of fruit. Also, Olha grows pomegranates, pistachio trees, and a wide variety of vegetables in her garden that is almost a hectare in size. Olha enjoys working in her garden. What matters most though is that her son Viktor is nearby, in his wheelchair. And she can take care of him.

CARING FOR OTHERS

Sixteen years ago, her younger son Viktor had an accident, followed by six months in a coma and dozens of surgical operations. Lots of love, faith, and care followed. Today, Viktor is 27, he cannot walk or talk, but thanks to his mom, he lives and smiles.

Olha does not like to talk about how hard and painful her past years were. She was the one who provided for her family, because her husband was also sick and could not work. She worked as a cook, a post carrier, and a cleaner in a club. And she also had a huge garden. They harvested a lot more vegetables than the family could consume. But Olha was embarrassed to sell it at the market, and just gave it out to their neighbours.



Olha Zayets



Shadbush in blossom

All that time, she had no dreams of anything, she was just doing everything she could to manage the life of her family. On top of that, a full-scale war broke out, and Olha received additional worries about her eldest son, who joined the Territorial Defence Forces.

“SIMPLE RURAL WOMAN”

When she learned about the WINGS project, she thought that it was not for her: *“Well, how could I go? I am a simple rural woman, with lots of personal issues.”* But her niece reassured her, and they joined the project together.

The project brought together very different women. *“I saw, however, that they still had much in common. Everyone had their own fears and worries,”* says Olha.

The participants became close friends and supported each other. *“I rushed to every session, where my soul could rest,”* says Olha. She has very fond memories of her travel to a business workshop in Poltava, and then to a cross-regional event that WINGS held in Lviv. Those left a lot of impressions, because before that Olha had never ever gone beyond the region boundaries!

What mattered most was that while in the project, Olha managed to look at her garden from a different angle – as a potential business project. During training, she learned how to promote and sell products. For the first time in her life, she wrote a business plan.

“

“WINGS opened up an entire new world for me.”

”

A NEW START

Supported by the project, Olha received a greenhouse and began to grow seedlings of all kinds of vegetables. Now she grows several dozen varieties of eggplants, tomatoes, and bell peppers. She found wholesale buyers and signed sales agreements with local stores.

“

“I am grateful to WINGS that I found the strength to live on and grow. Thanks for showing me the way!”

”



Olha and her greenhouse

Now, Olha is focused on her home production and is happy that she stays by her son taking care of him. She says she feels much more confident and balanced, even despite the war. She was invited to lead the local community centre.

This past autumn, Olha planted some more of her favourite shadbush trees. Now she expects a generous yield to please buyers with the sweet fruits.

2022



STORY 16. CLOTHING BRAND. MARYNA TSYHRYK FROM POLTAVA

“THE KNOWLEDGE I GAINED HELPED ME TO MASTER MYSELF AND START DOING WHAT I LOVE”

My name is Maryna. I am 27 years old, and I am from Poltava, Ukraine. I used to work in the public sector as an executive director of an ecological company, but I've always wanted to create something on my own, to make creative things. I dreamed of creating my own clothing brand.

I learned about the WINGS project from social media. I thought the project could help me because I knew I lacked knowledge about business – about strategy and expenses and so on. I am very happy that everything came together with the WINGS project and I received the knowledge that I lacked.

The supportive atmosphere during the project inspired me a lot. Every participant had her own story and experience. I really liked the sessions with mentors. I still use what I learned.

The financial planning exercises were very useful for me since this has been my weaker side. I first learned why it is so important to keep a budget and related statistics, how to properly set a price. This makes it much easier for me now, and I am more financially sound leading my business.



“After completing the project, I resigned and fully focused on my clothing brand. I also got a chance to receive seed funding from WINGS, which helped me partially cover the costs of creating a new collection.”

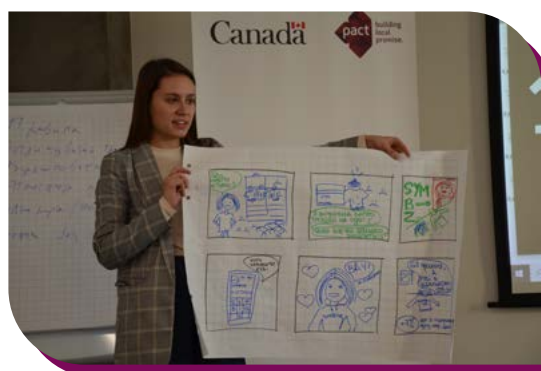


Unfortunately, the full-scale Russia's war forced me to temporarily stop my business. It was very hard emotionally. In time, I managed to understand that I have to do what I like, no matter the circumstances. Right now, the work helps distract me from bad news and anxiety.

That's how I created a new collection dedicated to Ukraine. The knowledge I gained in the project helped me to master myself and start doing what



Maryna Tsyhryk



Maryna during the WINGS business model validation training



Maryna's collection 2022 dedicated to Ukraine

I love. I am very glad that I've had the opportunity to learn from excellent mentors and teachers.

I used to rely on partner in my business who handled all of the accounting and numbers because she knew it better. Now I can even do it on my own, thanks to the WINGS project.

STORY 17. BAKING CAKES AND PASTRIES. NATALIYA HAVRYLIV FROM ZOLOCHIV, LVIV REGION

“THANKS TO THE WINGS PROJECT, I BECAME STRONGER AND MORE CONFIDENT IN MYSELF”

My name is Nataliia Havryliv, and I have three amazing children. We live together in Zolochiv, in Ukraine's Lviv region.

It's been five years since I started making cakes and other pastries with my sister to sell. Before Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, our baked goods helped our neighbors to celebrate holidays and special occasions.

Last year, I learned about the WINGS project. I trusted it, and with my sister I joined the project. The atmosphere was amazing, with women supporting and helping each other. Before the invasion, we used to go for coffee, and I am sure we will continue this tradition after Ukraine wins.

At first, we were all skeptical about the project. We thought the weekly sessions were too much, but soon we understood that even once a week was not enough, and we were eagerly waiting for the next meeting.

I remember most of the affirmations – positive statement exercises – that helped me a lot to increase my self-confidence. At first I thought it was funny, but it really worked. Before joining the project, I couldn't even think of going to local cafes to offer them my pastries. But during WINGS, I increased my self-confidence to the level that I would go to the cafes right after the meeting and offer my services. It paid off in the end – we are now working with one café on a regular basis, and they order many pastries from us.



Nataliia donates her pastry to Ukrainian defenders



Nataliia and her sister



“After completing the program, I developed a business plan, something I couldn’t have done before. But during WINGS, I learned how to calculate the cost of my products, why you should set higher prices, and how to convey this to the customers. It helped me a lot and taught me to appreciate my work more. I understood that I could do more than I thought at first. My income even increased a little because I found new opportunities to earn.”



When the full-scale war started, my work temporarily stopped. Like all Ukrainians, I was devastated and felt scared. It was very difficult. I was thinking about whether to leave the country with my children, but in the end I decided to stay, and believe I did the right thing.

For one month I wasn’t working, but then I understood that work helps me to distract myself from the news, plus other benefits. At first, I started to bake bread, then added pastries that could stay fresh longer, to send to our Ukrainian armed forces. At first, we baked with our own money, but soon other people began donating to us so we could bake and send more.

Slowly orders have started to come back – cakes for children and small pastries. Now my sister and I are volunteering twice a week for our Ukrainian Armed forces, while other days are dedicated to making dessert orders. I am very happy when volunteers send me photos of defenders with our products. I was especially moved when I saw photos with Easter cakes.



Natalia sent her Easter cakes to the front-line



“Thanks to the WINGS project, I became stronger and more confident in myself, which helped me to start volunteering and ignore criticism from the outside. I am doing my job and have joined the struggle for peace. It is very valuable for me.”



STORY 18. EMPLOYMENT. YANA PEREBIRNA FROM SHYSHAKY, POLTAVA REGION

“I HAD MANY DOUBTS AND WORRIES, BUT I DECIDED TO TRY”

I was born and live in Shyshaky. There was a time when I worked in Shyshaky district state administration, but because of cut backs, I was left without a job.

I saw a Facebook post that the WINGS project supports women in gaining employment and launching small businesses. I invited my girlfriends since many people in our community face the same problem.



“At first, I had many doubts and worries because I was not sure how this can help me. But I decided to try, and now I am very happy about it.”



Since July 2021 Yana works at the Shyshaky passport desk

The group sessions were very interesting. One of the sessions that I remember best was an exercise about the “good news box.” When we started, participants were not acquainted. To meet each other we were asked to share the good things that happened to us during the week. At first, all the participants were stuck since no one had a job, women stay at home, and we couldn’t think of positive things. But once our facilitator shared her good news, we understood that there are many good things happening in life, we simply don’t notice them all. Then every week we started to look for positive things in life to be able to share something during the next meeting. We learned to see small positive things around us.

The Studio of Opportunities program taught us to find time to care for ourselves, both in physical and mental health, which no one had time before we joined the project. My classmates and I started learning English, reading books, watching movies, understanding that self-value and self-development is important for ourselves and the wellbeing of our families. On top of that, we managed to find jobs and start our own businesses.

After the Studio we were divided into two groups – some chose employability skills trainings, others learned business skills. I chose the employability pathway. During the study process, we learned how to create a resume, get ready for interviews and prepare documents for competitions. We received not only employability skills. We learned how to look differently at the world and our own life.

During the Studio sessions, we had an exercise in affirmations – to give ourselves small instructions every morning. At first you read those instructions as a poem, but with time, you start reading them thoughtfully and meaningfully. My affirmation has been: *“I will have a job, and everything will be perfect.”* When I was walking around the house and reading my instructions out loud, my husband was laughing at me at first, but I continued to read them even louder. Later he got used to it and started supporting me.

One day I went to the employment center to get a stamp and met the head of the passport desk who told me that they were planning to open a vacancy for the passport desk specialist soon. When I saw the ad, I decided to apply. The competition was high, so I worried a lot. But I started preparing, learning about many laws and other legal documents.

Here another affirmation helped me, which I read every morning while preparing for the competition: *“I will pass, everything is going to be okay.”*



“I still read my affirmations from time to time because these are important instructions that you give yourself and then do. Nothing falls from the sky. You must try and believe in yourself.”



The process was very long and tiresome. There was one competition at first, then another one, but I succeeded. In July, I started working as a specialist at the Shyshaky passport desk.

Yana continues working at the Shyshaky passport desk. Now she works 7 days a week, without even taking a lunch break and is proud of it, because she helps Ukrainians. Her son and husband are serving in the Ukrainian Army now. When Yana has an opportunity, she donates some money to the Army. "I help as much as I can. I try to bring our victory closer."

STORY 19. EMPLOYMENT. ANHELINA KAHALNYTSKA FROM SHELESTOVO, KHARKIV REGION

FINDING A JOB AFTER 15 YEARS OF MATERNITY LEAVE

We have a large family – five kids – all active and smart and attending school. The past 15 years I dedicated myself to bringing up children, but three months ago I made a big change and I found a job as a tutor in a local kindergarten. My education is as a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature, so this is somewhat my profession.

Starting from the beginning, my husband and I decided that we would do everything together, and the kids help us. Even though my husband works a lot, at home we each have our own responsibilities. I wouldn't be able to do everything myself, since it's a lot of work, but together it is easier. I also always tried to find time for hobby. Since childhood, I have done handiwork. I make accessories and decor, and have even taken part in fairs for the village day. It is my love to make different pieces by hand.

Despite an active life, during maternity leave I lacked communication and contact with people since I stayed at home almost all the time. My friend from the village suggested that I take part in the WINGS project.

It was strange at first during WINGS sessions. It seemed superfluous – I have a household, kids, and little free time. At moments I didn't take it seriously, like with the affirmations that we were taught to exercise. Now I understand it is important since everything starts with the mind.

The atmosphere during the project was great. We all supported each other, were happy for the successes of others, and shared ideas. We shared stories and secrets.



Anhelina with her WINGS certificate



"WINGS taught us to appreciate ourselves and our work."



WINGS changed a lot in me, especially my attitude toward myself and money. I didn't pay much attention to the family budget before. I bought what was needed. Now I am trying to write down income and expenses. I better understand where the money is going and how much more I can accommodate for various needs. I have more confidence in myself. Needlework for me now is a way to get rest from my kids and work.

For 15 years, I was sitting in my cocoon – kids, household, husband. I've had a limited communication circle. But during WINGS I found new friends, including many people whom we lived close to but never communicated with. Now we can give each other advice and laugh together. The project gave me a very strong support system.

After completing WINGS, I understood at last that I wanted to find a job. I stayed at home for too long. Our village is rather small, so there are not many options. I'd heard that a tutor for the kindergarten was needed and got the job.

I have 23 kids in a group, with 70 kids in the kindergarten in all. Our village is friendly, people are open, so working here is pure pleasure. The staff is nice and friendly, and everyone comes for help when needed. I go to work with a lot of happiness, just like for the WINGS project.

Even though I have a job, I still have the idea of creating a store in the village with my handiwork. Thanks to the WINGS, I now know that I will succeed, I just need to try.

Most of all, a woman on the way to realization is restrained by the fear she will be condemned. There are a lot of stereotypes that a village woman is different from city women and doesn't know how to present herself. And this cancels everything. Right away you think, What if I don't succeed?



"It doesn't matter whether you are in a city or a village – if you do nothing, then you will have nothing. I know for sure that I can, and I want to develop further."



The most important is to believe in yourself, and then you will succeed. We greatly underestimate what our self-belief is capable of. You need to look, search out what can be done and realized. You must reach for your goal step by step.

Right now, I would like to realize myself in handiwork. I would like to do an exhibition during the village day in September. And then I plan to open my store.

After the full-scale war began, Anhelina didn't leave Ukraine and continues working in a kindergarten, but the kindergarten is now done remotely (online). She helps the Ukrainian Army making masking net with her colleagues in her spare time.

STORY 20. WOOL FELTING. KATERYNA SHCHYRA FROM KOLODENTSI, LVIV REGION

TURNING HANDICRAFTS INTO A PROFITABLE BUSINESS

In my life, I studied to be a hairdresser, a manicure master, a social worker. But due to a health condition, I could not work in any of these specialties. While I was on maternity leave, I started to look for a business where I did not have to travel or be with people often as a precaution because of a kidney transplant.

I always had a knack for handicrafts. I made necklaces and decorated wreathes. I was always told to make something and then sell it, but I wanted to find something that will bring both joy and income.

I looked more closely into felting in the last five years because I like it a lot. But no one in my family did it because it is not a traditional thing for our village. It is expensive to learn felting. One needs to invest a lot into this business, look for wool, and order a lot.

At first, I started making slippers and gave them to my friends and family. I then posted them on social media, and someone ordered them. I was happy, but still not sure how to proceed and whether I could really launch a business. I was uncertain and afraid. Then I saw an ad on social media announcing the WINGS project. I didn't know what to expect and hoped to get something useful out of it.



“During the project, I received unbelievable support. This included knowledge, advice and, most important, personal relationships with women who, like me, wanted a change in their lives.”



During WINGS, I completed business trainings. It was very new and complicated, but I worked hard and developed a business plan. It was supported by the selection committee, and I got funding to buy shoe pads and a press. It is easier now for my hands, and quicker. I need the press to make holes in bags and add accessories. I had to go to Lviv before to make the holes and put on various fasteners and buckles. Now I can make it all at home.

Now I make slippers, necklaces, handbags, and toys. My imagination works very well, and sometimes I wake up and already have a vision of what I would like to make. Then I sit down and draw.

In WINGS, I learned how to sell my products. I put them up for sale on Facebook. I also got



Kateryna with her products at a fair



Slippers from Kateryna

a tip during WINGS to look for fairs, to market my product and to show myself. That's why when we had Independence Day, with fairs in Zhovtantsi, Horpyn, I brought handbags, wallets, necklaces, and brooches – all from rolled out wool. It was hard at first because I understood I might not sell anything at all. No one in the area does wool felting. But I wanted people to understand what rolled out wool means, to touch what I make. To my surprise, I even managed to sell something. And because of these fairs I received promotion, and people started talking about me.

I was asked to conduct a master class for children on how to make Christmas decorations. I wouldn't dare to do this before, but during WINGS we learned to speak, believe in ourselves, be open to something new. So I did it. Children are so sincere and interesting. When you see they manage to do it, you return home with a lot of joy.

Women are often afraid of a risk. Often husbands do not support women. But you always must dream and move forward. I always dream of something – and never think that everything is bad. Don't think, just try. Because if you scare yourself all the time, you will never do anything. Even if you fail, it will be a good lesson that will show you where to go next.

Kateryna continues making the goods and her business continues. She adapted the design of her products and now makes them in yellow and blue colors (the colors of Ukrainian flag) and adds a Ukrainian national emblem or a Ukrainian flag to her products.



Kateryna's products

STORY 21. PRODUCTS MADE FROM CORD. OLENA TROIAN FROM BILYKY, POLTAVA REGION.

"I HAD TO DISCOVER MYSELF WHEN I WAS 50"

For almost a year now, Olena has earned money selling her products made from cord. Before that, she worked for someone else. But she never liked this job. Once, due to a long illness, Olena could not work, and then she had to find a job again. One day she saw on the internet some beautiful cord carpets. She'd had a knack for needlework all her life, and although the cord was expensive, she got very excited, and ordered materials for one carpet and then for another. She tried to knit first by watching video lessons, and this is how her hobby started.

“I had to quit my job, as I didn’t like it, and sit down to knit,” Olena Troian says.

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“If you know how to bake – bake. That way you earn money from home, and no one will tell you that you are doing something wrong. If you know how to bake, knit, sew and you love this, don’t be afraid and just do it.”

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Last spring, Olena heard that the WINGS project was recruiting participants. She hesitated because nothing like it had been offered in her village before. But she listened to herself and decided to take part.

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“I started to value myself. The affirmations that we learned during the project are helping a lot. Those are positive phrases that you tell yourself to support yourself. For example, you look at yourself in the mirror and say that I will succeed, you smile at yourself. I knew about this methodology before but didn’t believe it works until I tried.”

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The project also gave Olena much-needed business knowledge. *“To be honest, I did not know much about it. It was difficult for me to write a business plan. I’ve never even heard such words before, but we learned it all. I learned through the project that it is possible to weave not only carpets but also handbags. So I got funding for handbag materials.*

It feels as if I’ve been knitting my whole life – I love it so much. It doesn’t matter that I came up with my own business only in my 50s. I knit now, and my mood is immediately better. It was very difficult for me to go to work; I didn’t want to at all. But if it brings you joy, then it’s yours.”

Olena doesn’t have a separate workshop area, so she must knit right in the middle of the house. Her husband and son get angry when half of the room is filled with cords, which is why Olena dreams of having a separate workshop in the future.

Her advice for other women who want to start a business? *“Just start doing it,” she says. “When I was first told to knit handbags, I thought that the cord is expensive, and the*



Olena and her bags



Olena’s products

handbag will be expensive too. And in principle, I was ashamed to show my works. Then I tried to show them once, twice, and sold them. People liked them. I started receiving orders. I wish that every woman would listen to herself and do what she feels drawn to."

After Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Olena experienced problems with the supply of materials for her bags and had to pause for a month. As of now, she is able to resume her small business even though her sales have decreased. She says her business helps her emotionally to go through these difficult times for all Ukrainians.

STORY 22. CREATING PHOTO ZONES. ANNA KOURBATSKA FROM VASYLKIV, KYIV REGION

"I'VE HAD THREE DAYS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO, AND IT IS ART"

In my life, I have worked at a marketing firm, then as a miller, and made models from different materials. As it turned out, I resigned, and went in search of myself to the military department and became a reserve officer. When I graduated from military school, I found myself in a deep depression. I lost myself in wondering about what I really wanted and how to realize it. Then I saw a Facebook ad about the WINGS project that provides support to women who want to develop professionally. I was unemployed and decided to join the project.



"I believe that all the changes that happened in my life came because I joined WINGS and because our coordinator came along. She very much believed in me and the other participants, and she helped us set priorities in our lives."



Anna is next to the arch she made

Since I was a child, I always did something related to art. I was good at sewing and needlework. For my wedding 10 years ago I wove a wedding bouquet made of beads. And although I have always been working in technical specialties, I have always been drawn to creativity.

During the project, I met women who organize holidays, run corporate parties, and serve in church. I was given an opportunity to decorate a church, then create a photo zone for the themed holidays. Once I was also offered the chance to create a decorative arch for our city day.

I don't always like my own works and am very critical toward myself. Last spring, before I joined WINGS, I was very low. I lacked inspiration and self-belief. I was thinking, I can't do anything, I am not capable of anything. Every woman experiences similar thoughts. Especially if your current job does not bring you satisfaction or if you studied what you like but then it was impossible to find a job in this specialty.

During WINGS I first learned to speak about my problems and share them with others, and then I understood I am not the only one. I then realized that when you want something, you just need to start without thinking what happens tomorrow and look for support – from your husband, girlfriends, God, or else. Even if you have a thousand doubts, the faith of one person in you can inspire you.

I do not have a huge practice in creating photo zones. That is why I do them slowly but with great responsibility. I look at different pictures, get inspired, and come up with something of my own unlike anything else. I do not use templates but always ask my customers what they like and try to feel the inner self of a person, and base my ideas on this.

Anna is one of 5.3 million Ukrainians who fled Ukraine because of the Russian military invasion.



Anna and her photo zone

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“I am still in touch with girls from the WINGS project. Every month we go for coffee and tell each other what we're doing, and support each other if someone needs help. This is how we became close friends, and it gives us a lot of support.”

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STORY 23. KIDS CLUB. NATALYA ANOKHINA FROM LVIV

“I TRIED EVERYTHING TO THE MAXIMUM”

I live with my family in the Lviv region, but I am originally from the Donetsk region, from Snizhne city. In 2013, we moved here because my husband was offered a job. For eight years, we have lived here in a rented apartment, and we can no longer go back to the East.

There is not much work here. People primarily make income working in Europe. I have been without a job, staying home with my first child and pregnant with a second. It was difficult for me during the last few months of pregnancy, but I nevertheless decided to take part in the WINGS project when I learned about it.



“Before, I didn’t believe in myself. My self-esteem has always been low, because when you have a maternity leave for five years, you feel as if the world has stopped. When I came into the project, I saw that people have different life stories, and in fact mine isn’t as bad as I thought it was. That’s how my wings have grown a bit.”



After the Studio sessions, I completed business training. I came up with an idea for my business by accident. While on maternity leave with my second child, I had time to think about how to better educate a child. I read many books about the Montessori methodology, and when I saw in practice how it works, I was surprised and happy.

When I saw on the street how parents interact with their kids, I thought that I could share this knowledge with other parents. That is how I came up with an idea to open a kids club called Little Genius. I wanted to have classes with children starting from 6 months old.



“I completed business skills training and prepared a business plan. To my surprise, I received financing for my idea. The funding paid for Montessori games. So, I am ready to start!”



Thanks to the project funding, Natalya received games for her kids club

From the WINGS project I got as much as I could. During the first class, we were told that we had three options: to prepare a business plan and get financing for your idea, to find a job, or to start learning IT skills. I asked, “*Could I do all three options?*”

I first hesitated about whether to attend IT courses. I do not speak English, and do not know how to work with a computer. But I completed an interview and got accepted to an Intro to IT course and then an Advanced IT course. These courses are for pay, but we could also apply for a stipend. I first hesitated, because soon I’d have my baby, and I thought that with an infant it would be very difficult to study. Nevertheless, I decided to apply, to try everything to the maximum.

That’s how I received a stipend for the Quality Assurance (QA) course. My first job after college was as a specialist of technical control. The QA profession is a bit similar – one needs to know the technical process of creating a program and then test and control it so that the program is accessible and convenient for the user.



“WINGS allowed me to believe in myself as I am – purposeful, a dreamer, sincere, motivated, and someone who doesn’t listen when told, ‘You can’t do it’.”



Natalya was unable to open her kids club because of the war. While Natalya stayed where she lives, most local families with children fled Ukraine. Natalya hopes that after the war, families will come and she will be able to realize her dreams and plans.

STORY 24. COSMETIC PRODUCTS FROM HERBS. SVITLANA STOROZHENKO FROM NOVA VODOLAH, KHARKIV REGION

“I RECEIVED SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO DEVELOP MY OWN BUSINESS”

Eight years ago, Svitlana Storozhenko from Kharkiv started creating cosmetic products from herbs. Her path toward natural components started due to illness. Today, Svitlana continues experimenting with herbs, and with help from the WINGS project she launched her own business.

How did your path to herbs start, and what does “natural cosmetics” mean?

I didn't come to herbs right away. I finished university with a diploma in botanica. I also have a medical degree. I once got sick and decided that I did not want to get treatment with conventional drugs and started to look for an alternative, to learn about herbs and plants from the encyclopedia. My daughter and I even left for three months once to collect herbs in the forest.



Svitlana

At first, I started to collect phyto tea a little. Then some of the girls I know asked for face cream which doesn't dry your skin. I learned what this cream consists of and decided to make an alternative with natural components.

Natural means that I add herbal extracts to each of my products. That way it is not simply cosmetics – it also has a healing effect.

Soap was my first good product. Then my whole family switched to natural soap. I then started making creams, hand balms, shower gels, shampoos, and more. Each product has an herbal extract.



Soap made by Svitlana

I collect these herbs myself, dry them in the attic, and then add to cosmetics. People who start using such cosmetics usually become regular customers. I also make vitamin supplements.

Can a hobby be turned into a profitable business?

This is what I am aiming for. I heard about the WINGS project and that it supports women in their professional realization. I joined the project with huge interest because I love to study.

I received support and vision that my passion for herbs and cosmetics could be taken to a new level. I've been doing cosmetics for a long time but was giving it as gifts to my friends and neighbors. But in WINGS, I received the confidence that I need to develop and not be afraid to go for more. During the intensive training I received knowledge how to promote

your business. I am now ready to present my products at fairs and on social media. Yes, it is difficult, but I started.

I can speak about the herbs for a long time, but I am quite far away from such words as “business model.” Once I finished WINGS business trainings and received mentorship and necessary knowledge, I was filled with inspiration and a vision of where to go next. Within the project, my business plan received financial support, and that’s how I bought an oil press.

What is an oil press is and why did you need it?

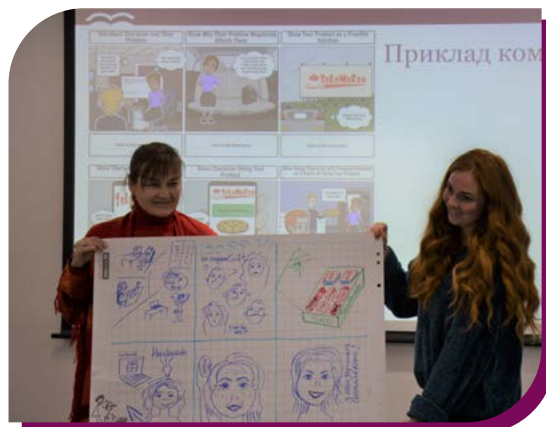
I’ve had a dream to buy an oil press for a long time. I have a lot of land at my summer house, so there is an opportunity to maintain a medical garden. I also grow many medicinal shrubs – sea buckthorn, hazelnuts, goji berries, blackberries, chokeberries. Now I can make raw oils from all this. They contain a lot of macro- and micro-elements and vitamins, such as vitamin E. And in cosmetics they have an incredibly beneficial effect.

I also started making hydrophilic oils for washing. Cosmetics based on this oil are amazingly washed off, and the skin remains moisturized after washing.

Where does a woman find confidence and strength to start her own business or do the job she loves?

It is all inside of us. No need to look outside. If I hadn’t gotten sick, I probably wouldn’t have started working with medical plants. My intuition then suggested the right path to me. We run in a hurry, we waste energy in vain. You just need to hear your inner voice. And support from the WINGS project was at the right time and place.

With Russia’s war on Ukraine, Kharkiv city has been heavily affected by hostilities. The city has been bombarded by Russian missile rockets. Many residents including Svitlana had to flee. Svitlana is now in Poland exploring ways to resume her business there, but her tools were left in Kharkiv.



Svitlana and her daughter also participated in the WINGS business model validation program



Svitlana’s oil press was funded by the WINGS project

BE BRAVE LIKE UKRAINIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS





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