

Former Ukrainian succeeding at Clackamas

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Feature Editor

Clackamas student Katya Antipin was 16 years old when she left her home in Ukraine, Russia to make a journey that would affect her life forever.

In Ukraine, people went about their daily lives while the Antipin family packed a few belongings and boarded a plane for the United States. Antipin's family came to Oregon looking for a better life.

"My relatives lived here seven and a half years ago. After they moved we wrote letters to each other, and my parents were thinking about doing that [moving to the United States] too. There was nothing else they would be able to give us [children] there. They were not sure we would be able to go to school after high school," Antipin said.

In Russia, and other countries, not just anyone can attend college.

"It's not enough to pass entry school," Antipin explained. "To get into school you had to take a test. If you pass, you go; and if you don't [pass], you don't go. It's a little bit different here I guess. You had to pay first, and it was an amount that people usually couldn't afford."

It was a long, detailed process for the Antipin family to move to Oregon.

"When my relatives said that they were able to get the application for us and that they would be able to help us get here, we said 'if it works out, we'll go'. So we started thinking about it, getting the information and filling out the application. It was two years before we got everything done. It was like a nightmare," explained Antipin.

"When we went to Moscow for our interview, we didn't have any relatives there. We stayed in a church with those fold-up beds. It was kind of bad. It was two days and three nights. When we went home we got the results that we were able to go," she said.

Her family sold everything they had except some clothes, dishes and pictures that they would need when they got to Oregon.

"Anything we couldn't sell or didn't have time to sell, we gave to our friends and relatives," said Antipin.

"In Moscow our plane was late. Not just two hours, but six or seven hours. When they finally announced we were leaving, you couldn't imagine those people running and pushing to get on the plane. It was embarrassing to me. I was ready to cry. It seems to me that it's so hard there, that people are willing to kill each other just to get on a plane and move out," Antipin said.

On Oct. 22, 1993 Antipin's family arrived in Oregon. They stayed with relatives for the first couple of months. Antipin was the personal interpreter for her parents and younger brother. She was needed especially for medical appointments.

In Ukraine Antipin had only one year left of high school.

"I wasn't sure if I should go to high school or get my GED. There were some people saying I shouldn't go to high school. 'You almost graduated there so you should just study for your GED,'" Antipin explained.

Antipin began attending Milwaukie High School in December 1993. It was difficult for her; but there was another Ukrainian girl there, so she wasn't alone.

"I didn't speak [any English]. I could say a couple of words, maybe, and, maybe, if you talked real slow and used simple words. I did have English in my school like you have Spanish. I had it for two hours a week, but I didn't pay to good attention to that. I had to go to regular classes and listen to English all the time, and I had to do my homework," Antipin explained.

"My counselor interpreted all of my courses I had in Ukraine and found out how many hours I had and if they could give me credit for those classes. So they took my science and geography classes and gave me credit for them," she said.

Time went by and Antipin earned her diploma.

"I didn't know where to go after that. I was afraid to continue because my English wasn't perfect yet and I still had to work on it. I didn't know how to move on. Where

should I go? Many people were saying that I should go to a four-year school and get a degree. I liked math, so my math instructor suggested Lewis and Clark," said Antipin.

Antipin tried to get into Lewis and Clark; but she had not taken her SAT and did not have her other papers ready, so she missed the application deadline.

She was still determined to go to school, so she met with her counselor and learned she was eligible for many scholarships.

Antipin was awarded two scholarships: the Streeter Memorial Scholarship and the Harold Taylor district scholarship.

"At that point I knew that if Lewis and Clark didn't work, I had an option," she said.

When Antipin found out she could work while a student, she went to an organization to help her find a job. Her first job was at McDonalds and she worked there for about a year. Antipin currently works at Consumers National Bank in Beaverton.

"I got that job with the help of some other Russian people. At the bank it's more flexible. I work five hours a day three days a week. I love my job. It's a little far away but it's worth it," Antipin explained.

Antipin's father has been working at Phoenix Gold for two years. He speaks some English, but works in a company where other Russian people work so he is able to communicate in Russian.

Antipin's mother was recently laid off from her job, so she is cur-

rently going to school to learn English and study for a two year professional degree like accounting or bookkeeping.

Liza, Antipin's sister, is 12 years old and attends sixth grade at Whitcomb Elementary School in Milwaukie. Liza speaks English very well. Antipin says her sister is lucky because she regularly ice skates at Clackamas Town Center.

In August 1995 Antipin's brother Nicholas was born. He was a welcomed surprise.

Antipin has noticed many differences between Russia and the United States, especially in the schools.

"We don't have separation between elementary and high school, maybe some separation between floors. For example: all of the students between the first and the fifth grade would be on the first floor and the third floor would maybe be high school age. We go through all of school with the same people. You know everybody in your class," said Antipin.

She still writes letters to her friends from school and hopes to go back to Ukraine someday and visit them. It's too expensive for her friends to come here.

"There is such a big gap between the poor and the rich. There were some people in my school who could go to foreign countries on vacation, and there are some who could only dream about it," Antipin said.

At Clackamas, Antipin is currently taking 17 credits, working toward a degree in math. She hopes to transfer to Lewis and Clark next year.



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Katya Antipin is a math major at Clackamas. She hopes to transfer to Lewis and Clark College next year.

Student Profile

•Who

Katya Antipin, former Russian/Ukrainian citizen who is currently a student at Clackamas

•What

Recipient of the Streeter Memorial Scholarship and the Harold Taylor District Scholarship

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Katya Antipin student

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