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## Ukrainian family finds refuge with friends on the North Coast

### Shekhovtsova and her two boys fled the war

By **ETHAN MYERS**  
*The Astorian*

**K**atya Shekhovtsova left almost everything behind. All she brought on her five-day journey from Ukraine to the North Coast was her two sons — Luka, 7, and Matthew, 5 — and a suitcase.

Her husband, Andriy, stayed behind after Ukraine required men aged 18 to 60 to remain after Russia invaded.

“It was a hard decision, of course,” Shekhovtsova said of leaving her husband, her house, her friends and her family to come to the United States. “But my husband said this will be safer for us and he will feel more (secure) knowing that we are in a good place.”

Shekhovtsova does not know how long she and her boys will stay, but the Millers — the Knappa family that helped bring them to Oregon — are doing everything they can to make them feel at home.

Heather and Tim Miller, who work as substitute teachers in the Knappa School District, knew Shekhovtsova and her husband from when they lived in Ukraine for over a decade.

The couple relocated to Eastern Europe in 1997 to work with churches and young people on leadership development. Shekhovtsova, a member of the same church, became the piano teacher to several of the Millers’ children and the families soon became close friends.

As the potential for a Russian invasion built in Ukraine, the Millers kept in communication with Andriy Shekhovtsov, assuring him they had a place for the four of them to stay if war broke out.

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Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Katya Shekhovtsova holds her son Luka, 7, as he looks at her phone. Oxana Miller holds a phone as Andriy Shekhovtsov appears in a video chat from Ukraine. Heather Miller translates a phrase to English for Katya Shekhovtsova.

**Katya Shekhovtsova** | Ukrainian who had to flee her country with her two sons, leaving her husband behind because Ukraine required men aged 18 to 60 to remain after Russia invaded.

## Researchers track health of gray whales

Whales are migrating north along the coast

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
*KMUN*

Giants are passing by the Oregon Coast right now: Gray whales migrating north, heading to the Bering Sea from calving grounds in Baja California, Mexico.

After several years of seeing “skinny” gray whales — whales apparently not finding enough food en route — and varied improvement amid shifting ocean conditions, researchers have been concerned about issues in the massive animals’ food chain.

Leigh Torres, an associate professor with Oregon State University and part of the Oregon Sea Grant extension, leads a team in field work along the coast each summer to collect important data on gray whales.

Last year, whales were few and far between, she said. Torres is hoping to see more and healthier whales this year. Some of the underfed whales they spotted in years past have not recovered to where researchers think they



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**A gray whale breaching in the Pacific Ocean.**

should be.

“So we’re hoping that they show up in relatively good body condition and gain weight throughout the summer,” she said.

Gray whales are the most commonly sighted whale species on the West Coast and were the first marine mammals to be recovered through the federal Endangered Species Act, according to the state. Though they are no longer listed as endangered, they still

face a number of threats, including boat collisions, entanglement with fishing gear and other disturbances, such as climate change.

The information Torres and her team collects informs not only ongoing research into gray whales, but also discussions about the overlap between humpback and blue whales and fishing activities.

Oregon celebrates two different gray whale watching weeks each year: one in the spring and

one in the winter. In pre-pandemic times, these weeks brought trained volunteers to coastal lookouts to help visitors spot and identify gray whales.

This year, Oregon State Parks will bring back a popular whale watching livestream, available on the Oregon State Parks YouTube channel beginning on Monday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily through March 25. The Whale

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## City weighs response to behavioral problems

Tougher restrictions on RVs and repeat offenders

By **NICOLE BALES**  
*The Astorian*

Astoria is moving forward on several options to address bad behavior and quality of life concerns that stem from an increasingly visible homeless population.

The City Council in February prioritized tools to curb bad behavior. In the coming weeks, city councilors will consider adopting ordinances to handle RVs and stolen and abandoned shopping carts.

The council also plans to update the city’s camping ordinance, which would temporarily expel repeat offenders from specific places.

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