

## Honokaa temple's Peace Committee celebrates Buddha's Birthday promoting their cause

By Miles Okumura  
Peace Committee

On May 1, while celebrating Hanamatsuri as "Buddha's Birthday Party," the Honokaa temple used the occasion to start fund-raising to help five different families from war-torn Ukraine. The families were introduced to us by two residents on the Big Island.

Youth groups performed at the party -- the string classes at Honokaa High School and the Glee Club from Prince Dance Institute entertained the audience. Ukrainian food was



**Pot luck Plus Ukrainian Food !**  
Silent auction Donations welcome  
(contact Carol Plummer – 808-765-9163)

**Entertainment by Honokaa High School  
Gary Washburn's String Classes  
and  
Glee Club of Prince Dance Institute**

catered in addition to the potluck contributions. There was a contest for the best Birthday Cake for Buddha. Lucky number drawings were held for the youngsters, tickets to the local movie theater and a gift certificate at a pizza restaurant. In addition, there was a silent auction for items donated, the purpose of which was to raise money to support five Ukrainian families.

Combined with donations, the temple was able to raise over \$3,000 which was quickly dis-

tributed directly to the families via Moneygram.

A few weeks later, one of the families was able to emigrate to the Big Island and the Honokaa temple hosted an "aloha reception" for them. See articles below.

The event also received television news coverage. (<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/05/22/ukraine-family-finds-support-big-island-community/>).

As a result, additional money was raised and will be sent to the two families.

The following articles appeared on May 26 in the Tribune Herald and June 2022 edition of Hamakua Times. Reprinted with permission from David Bock/ Hawaii Tribune-Herald, and David Becker/ Hamakua Times.

## From Ukraine to the Big Island with aloha

By KELSEY WALLING/ Hawaii Tribune-Herald  
(<https://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com/>)

Honokaa is 12,454 miles away from Ukraine, but the two places have a new connection thanks to a generous community.

Marharyta Obodovska has recently moved from Alexandria, Ukraine to Hawaii Island with her two daughters, Darian and

Yelyzaveta, while her husband is still fighting at home.

On Friday, she and the girls were welcomed to the island with a special let greeting by the Honoka'a Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, and treated to a shopping spree in the temple's thrift store.

Obodovska was joined by her sister, Olena, who has lived on the island for the past three years.

The Obodovska ‘ohana is one of the five Ukrainian families that the Peace Committee is assisting, along with two others in Ukraine, and one each in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Last week, concurrently with Buddha’s Birthday Party, they raised over \$3,000 with a silent auction and voluntary donations. All the money was sent directly to the families.

“Having one of the families on the Big Island is wonderful, because now we can give them better support as well as friendship,” said organizer Miles Okumura. Marharyta and her daughters have been impressed and have felt welcomed during their experience in Hawaii. They noted that the weather is always warm to go along with a warm, familial environment.



Photo of members of the Peace Committee and community with family from Ukraine taken at “Aloha reception” held on May 20, 2022.



## Little Town – Big Heart

Hamakua Times

Honoka’a is 12,454 miles away from Ukraine, but the two places have a new connection thanks to a generous Honokaa community.

Marharyta [can be pronounced “Margarita”] Obodovska has recently moved from Ukraine to Hawai’i Island with her two daughters; her husband is still fighting at home. On Friday, she and the girls were welcomed to the island with a special lei greeting by the Honoka’a Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and other members of the community. In addition to lei and a variety of gifts, the family was



treated to a shopping spree in the temple's thrift store, "Da Basement Store."

The Obodovska 'ohana is one of the five Ukrainian families that the Honokaa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple is assisting, along with two other in Ukraine, and one each in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Concurrently with Buddha's Birthday Party last month, they raised over \$3,000 with a silent auction and voluntary donations. All the money was sent directly to the families.

"Through various connections—relatives, friends, and friends of friends— we learned about Marharyta and the others who were seriously in need of help," said organizer Miles Okumura. "So many of us see the stories in the newspaper and on television, and our hearts go out to the millions of people suffering. We found a way to do what we can, and to personalize our compassion. This is a way to acknowledge how interconnected we all are. It's a human 'ohana, and we want to continue to help."

"We found a way to make a difference for at least some of the people," he continued. "It is wonderful to know that our little community can make a big difference to people who we have come to know personally. I hope people in our community will contribute what they can to help just these few people who have suffered so much."

Marharyta shared stories and photos of the family's ordeal in Ukraine, fleeing to Poland, and their journey to the U.S. mainland and then to Hawai'i Island. Their story was broadcast on local news — <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/05/22/ukraine-family-finds-support-big-island-community/>

If you would like to contribute to the Temple's good work, please visit [www.honokaahongwanjibuddhist-temple.org](http://www.honokaahongwanjibuddhist-temple.org).

