

My name is Marharyta. I come from Ukraine. War broke out in my country, and my city was attacked every day. There were countless destroyed houses, bridges, factories, roads, schools and universities. We could not stay in Ukraine, so my aunt invited me and my mother to America. We have traveled a long way. We lived in Poland and Germany before finally arriving in Toledo, Ohio in the summer of 2022.

In Ohio, I go to Sylvania Junior High School. At first, I was very worried about how I would adapt to a foreign country. My English was barely fluent at that moment. What surprised me most in an American school was the attitude of my teachers. They are very nice here, giving every child the opportunity to express themselves, to feel like real people. I have participated in various school projects and received a few awards. I found many, many friends; everyone treats me very well and offers their friendship to me. All the children wanted to help and support me, I didn't feel like a stranger at all. I can say that the American school is very different from the Ukrainian. I think it is amazing.

I always wanted to play volleyball and here I was very lucky. We met a Starlings volleyball coach, Dr. Paat, who helps Ukrainian children to learn about themselves. I'm just learning volleyball and I'm very grateful for this opportunity to make my dream come true. I try to learn, practice and repeat everything at home. My mother helps me, too. Sports are very developed here in America, and children have opportunities to play different sports. There are teams in every school, and I really want to play for my school's volleyball team.

America is the land of opportunity for all people and all nationalities. Here, if you work hard in your studies at school and then at a college, you have opportunities for a good job. I want to become an engineer and dream about studying at the Ohio State University. During this past year, I have fallen in love with America. Here, children have many opportunities to learn about themselves through different sports, activities, do science or drawing projects, study history or mathematics. Whatever you do, your efforts are always appreciated.