

The Veterans Hub побратим

My other volunteer workplace is "Pobratym". It is a Veterans Hub. The name means "brotherhood" and is used for terms like a 'group of brothers' as well. Curiously it is also the term used for "sister city". When I first got here, I was explaining that our two cities, Boulder and Vinnytsia were Sisters - but they use the word "pobratym" - so now I use both terms: Boulder and Vinnytsia are sister cities - like "pobratym".

This Veterans Hub is also a project of the Pinchuks'. I outlined their work in a previous post about the Recovery Hospital. The Pinchuks are not only philanthropic angels, they also oversee the implementation of the working infrastructures in the facilities they create. These Veterans Hubs are projects more recently developed to address the growing need to re-integrate injured Veterans back into civilian life. The center addresses housing needs, employment, legal consults as well as counseling and further rehabilitation.



My closest contact at Pobratym is Olexander Romamenko, a rehabilitation therapist with an interesting background. He started his higher education in religious studies but changed his mind after a few trips to India, then he went into philosophy, and then in England received a degree in psychology, then went on to study physical therapy in Poland. He is mostly blind from birth, he has 10 children and says it's not too hard to raise them because he and his wife live on a farm raising bees.

He has taken me out for Turkish falafels at his favorite dive, and shown me where to get Vinnytsian craft beer (which compares well with Colorado actually!), and we sometimes hang out at the market.



Above is a picture of him at work: He is using a blunt edged stainless steel "blade". There are many forms of these blades and he likes them a lot. I don't use them - tho I might if I had a lot of big guys to work on.

I'll take a minute here to talk about working with amputees, as this is something I am often asked about.



Once you have your hands on an amputated limb you realize immediately that everything is the same. What is under your hands is just tissue. The muscles still need to be separated, the scar tissue and fiber build up needs to be dissolved, the circulation and nerve layout is the same. The joint above is important to address, as well as the alternate limb, if there is one.

The Defenders love to have their limb touched. They are very happy that I am willing to touch and am comfortable. I don't have any specific techniques for phantom pain, but I imagine that touch helps the body feel sensations that help understand the situation - and is better able to adapt. I don't know. I just know that I can touch and help the circulation and nerve entrapments especially.

Pobratym is also the place where my local TV spot got filmed. My friend Yuliia, who works with the city council arranged the filming. For a week or so after it aired people would sometimes recognize me... little things like at the grocery store. It's a first for



me. I put the actual link on the website page so you can access it... but here are some pics from it.





Pobratym is a friendly home base for me. A lot of the staff are veterans and I have worked on them so they know me. There is always a security guard on staff there, in uniform, and I just love that he is usually the first to greet me with a hug. I don't often get hugged by cops (in or out of uniform!).

Pobratym is a place anyone can go and get help. The door is open and as soon as you walk in there are couches and coffee.

Also, my hotel is a less than block away (so is my other hospital "Recovery"). And between the two is the grocery store. So I could come to Vinnytsia and never have to go far from home. In the evenings I sometimes treat myself to a chocolate icecream popsicle from the grocery store. There are railings and steps outside and I hang out on the railing with my popsicle. So do others. So do unleashed dogs waiting for their owners - sneaking into the store making us all laugh. The big hospital being around the corner means that lots of patients (those that can) also come down to the grocery store, and their families, and the staff too. You all that know me - understand that this, for me, is the best of times.