

NOVEMBER 2023

**SARA’S WISH FOUNDATION AND THE UMASS TRANSPORTATION
CENTER EXPAND THEIR OUTREACH TO INCREASE SEATBELT
USAGE TO BUS COMPANIES, BUS ORGANIZATIONS,
AND SOUTH STATION IN BOSTON**



Seatbelt safety messages on the counters and at the loading area at South Station. Jesus Centeno, Asst Manager at South Station and Michael Plotnikov from the UMass Transportation Center.



Bus Stop Signage

South Station now has new signs encouraging bus riders to wear their seatbelts. The messaging with our Logo **“Sit – Click – Ride”** has been embraced by the management of South Station and these new signs will make riders aware of how important seatbelts are for their safety. We are encouraged that with the new messaging in our Seatbelt Kit, there will be more bus companies, bus organizations, and bus stations that will embrace this important seatbelt safety program. The new signs are on twenty-three poles next to each motor coach loading area in South Station as well as at the ticket counters of all the bus companies servicing South Station.



Sara's Wish Foundation and the UMass Transportation Center were featured on a **webinar on March 30th** speaking to the members of the United Motor Coach Association. Bus companies and bus organizations learned about our findings from our seatbelt study to **Increase Seatbelt Usage on Motor Coaches**. This type of outreach is so important to continue our safety messaging to the Motor Coach community.

University of
Massachusetts
Amherst

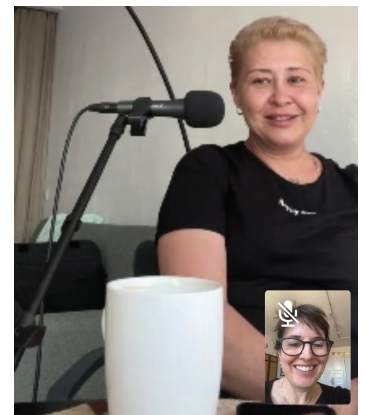
International
Programs Office

**University of Massachusetts
Amherst International
Programs Office (IPO)**

This year we have established an endowment, **The Sara's Wish Foundation Travel Award Fund of \$25,000.** This gift is to provide scholarship support for high-achieving undergraduates who are in financial need to pursue travel abroad experiences. This endowment will increase our involvement with UMass Amherst IPO and have an impact each year to have more young students to travel abroad.

THE
FORUM
ON EDUCATION
ABROAD

SWF has increased its financial support for safety training for study abroad professionals with a donation of \$12,250 which establishes a **Sara's Wish Fellows** scholarship program. Each year, one or more Sara's Wish Fellows will receive full funding for the Forum's Certification in Education Abroad program. Any remaining funding will support study abroad administrators from universities and colleges who are unable to afford to participate in the Forum Standard of Good Practice in Education Abroad, which includes Risk and Safety Management.



*SWF Recipient Alina Simone
remote-directing Natalia
Zubzova's voiceover for the
documentary film Black Snow.*

(more information about Alina
on the backside)

Award Recipients Reflect on the Impact of Sara's Wish Foundation on Their Lives and Their Work

Message From Documentary Filmmaker Alina Simone



*In January of 2023, Sara's Wish Foundation made a third-year donation to my feature documentary film, **Black Snow**, which shines new light on the human cost of open pit coal mining by following the story of Natalia Zubkova, a homemaker-turned-journalist, who unveils the environmental catastrophe unfolding in her remote Siberian hometown.*

Since August of 2019, we have tracked Natalia's journey in real time, from the moment she began posting videos of black snow blanketing her city, to her rise to prominence as the "Erin Brockovich of Russia." From death threats and forced exile from Russia, to Natalia's inspiring metamorphosis in a new country, thousands of miles from home. **Sara's Wish has accompanied us along every step of this four-year odyssey, never losing faith, and now I am thrilled to announce that we have finished *Black Snow* and are preparing for a worldwide debut in 2024.**

It is hard to articulate the meaningful role that SWF has played in this film. The grant funding has been incredibly impactful — every cent we received is reflected in what audiences will see on screen — but there is no way to put a price on the moral support we've received over the years from SWF's board and founding members. Making an independent documentary film is a lonely journey, even without a pandemic. It felt like we were always fighting battles on every front: raising money, trying to get our footage safely out of an increasingly-authoritarian Russia, protecting Natalia and helping her flee the country, competing with major productions for the best editors, composers and sound designers. The encouragement and faith we received from a tiny circle of friends and funders was often the only thing keeping us going; we developed a fierce desire to never let our early supporters down. And now...? Here we are!

We are already submitting *Black Snow* to festivals and will begin shopping it to broadcasters and streamers within a few months, once the final score, animation and graphics are complete.

At this point, we will also be able to turn our full attention to completing our second documentary feature, *Fear Zone*, which was also launched with grant support from SWF. I was introduced to the film's subject, former live-action movie star David Katsarava, while finishing up *Black Snow* in Georgia. Five years ago, David discovered that Russian troops stationed in Georgia's occupied territories were secretly moving the border posts in the night, stealing Georgian land. The victims of this campaign included elderly residents living along the occupation line, routinely terrorized into abandoning their homes. I spent a year following David's volunteer anti-occupation movement "Strength in Unity" as they patrolled Georgia's occupied territories unarmed and on foot, serving as a lifeline to the elderly villagers living along the border. David's single-minded quest to defend the borders of his tiny country against Putin's military machine is every bit as extraordinary as Natalia's. **Thanks again to Sara's Wish, for understanding the power of citizen action, the value of stories like these and the necessity of supporting everyday superheroes.**

Sara's Story Inspires New SWF Scholarship Recipient to Prioritize Road Travel Safety

I first went to Guatemala as a senior in college to study the effect of the civil war on children's mental health. I remember tossing my backpack to a man on the roof of a "chicken bus" that took us up dirt roads from Guatemala City to Panahachel to Quetzaltenango in the highlands. I spent one six-hour bus ride standing in the aisle due to the number of people crammed into the colorful



Sasha Yakhkind

refurbished school bus while bachata played on the driver's speakers. At the time, I did not think about road safety apart from closing my eyes and praying every time we rounded a sharp corner of a road traversing a steep volcano. I did not know how lucky we were. When I read about Sara, I realized her story could very well have been my own. Her life motivates me to work even harder towards global health equity and to take into consideration the role that road safety plays for everyone.... As a neurologist,

helmet use on bicycles and open-air motorized transportation is a soap box I will not step down from. Sara's story has encouraged me to be just as vigilant when it comes to being a passenger or pedestrian during my travels.

Update from Tanzania! SWF Funds Making a Difference!



Recently, Nathasja van Leeuwen sent us this update on the construction of an ob/gyn clinic in her rural Tanzanian community:

"We are all doing well. The main building has walls up to the roof, as well as the laboratory. We also managed to build the foundation of the pharmacy, make some of the floors in the main building and fill up the courtyard inside the main building with sand. The next big step will be the roof of the main building. We hope to achieve this step in the beginning of next year. All in all, my dreams are coming closer and closer. We are very happy as a family and feel lucky to be where we are."



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