



# THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

## War in Ukraine On the Minds Of Many

Those With Family Ties Increasingly Worried

By Corrie M. Anders

Almost every day since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, Yuliya Van de Sande has made a call or sent a text to family or friends caught up in the brutal war 6,000 miles away.

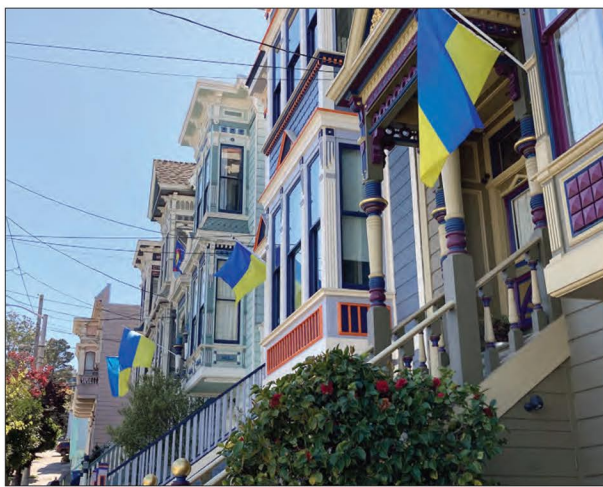
Each call brings a wave of anxiety for the Noe Valley shopkeeper, who fears the worst if a relative or friend fails to respond right away.

For Van de Sande and other local San Franciscans with ties to Ukraine, it has been a painful few weeks, filled with stories of wailing air-raid sirens, harrowing escapes to neighboring countries, and genuine human suffering as lives are lost and buildings destroyed in the conflagration in their homeland.

"It hurts," said Van de Sande, who owns the Flowers of the Valley boutique on 24th Street near Castro.

Van de Sande was born in the Ukrainian city of Odessa and immigrated to the United States in 1998, at the age of 18. She purchased the flower shop 10 years later.

"I'm talking to a lot of people that I'm still in contact with in Ukraine,"



**In Solidarity:** Within days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, flags began appearing on Noe doors and windows, in support of a country whose citizens had been left helpless in the face of war. Here they wave on a row of houses along Castro Street near 26th. Photo by Jack Tipple

she said. They are cousins, friends, and former classmates—some too old to leave the country and others who chose to "stay there and fight."

Remaining behind was especially difficult for her elderly godmother, Van de Sande said, and her godmother's 80-year-old husband. They live in a small

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## Business Owner Gets City to Relax Rules for Massage

Providers Can Set Up in Several Types of Medical Offices

By Matthew S. Bajko

Late last year, Cocoon Day Spa opened its doors on 24th Street and started offering massage services to Noe Valley residents. The lack of places nearby where people could book a massage was one of the primary reasons the owners had wanted to be in the neighborhood.

Two blocks away, Marnie McCurdy, owner of East-West Integrative Medicine Clinic at 23rd and Sanchez streets, was frustrated. A certified acupuncturist and longtime practitioner of Chinese medicine, she had planned to offer massage services when she bought the Noe Valley property in September 2019. Formerly home to health care provider One Medical, the space was already built out for a medical type use, and it wasn't far from her location in Glen Park, where she had been offering massage services for two decades.

"I'd thought it was fine to do massage [at 3901 23rd St.]. But after

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## Looser Rules for Massage Providers

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buying it, I found out I couldn't do massage there," said McCurdy. "So that was a little confusing. It definitely limited the income I could make there."

It wasn't that she was banned from offering massage. Rather, the permitting process had become long and involved, with no guarantee of success.

During the 2010s, former Supervisor Katy Tang had convinced the board to adopt strict rules for massage parlors, to discourage their use as fronts for sex trafficking. An unintended consequence was that the barriers were too high for legitimate massage practitioners. (In addition to getting licensed by the state and the San Francisco Health Department, would-be massage providers had to obtain special approval from the city's Planning Commission.)

The massage community responded by lobbying the supervisors to relax the zoning laws for legitimate massage businesses in San Francisco. District 9 Supervisor Hillary Ronen took up the cause and pushed through an ordinance last year allowing massage providers to partner with medical providers and work out of their offices.

Still, McCurdy had been sad to learn, Ronen's ordinance didn't apply to chiropractic or acupuncture clinics like hers. Working with massage advocates and other business leaders in Noe Valley, she pressed City Hall to expand the new rules so that proprietors like her could work with massage therapists.

"I just think everyone should be able to offer [massage] at a legitimate establishment," said McCurdy. "We are obviously a little more medically inclined, so why can't we do that?"

### The Headache Is Over

After being apprised of the issue, District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman introduced an ordinance Dec. 6 to correct the omission and include chiropractic and acupuncture businesses in the next zoning update. The supervisors adopted the zoning change with a unanimous 11-0 vote at their March 8 meeting.

"This ordinance recognizes that massage therapists, who are predominantly women and have been especially hard hit during the pandemic, are health service providers whose care we welcome in our neighborhoods," said Mandelman after its passage.

The new rules should take effect by the end of April or early May. Under the ordinance, any acupuncturist or chiropractor in a ground-floor commercial



By questioning an omission in a pending city ordinance, Marnie McCurdy, owner of East-West Integrative Medicine Clinic on 23rd Street, helped clear the path for massage practitioners to set up shop in the offices of chiropractors and acupuncturists. Photo by Art Bodner

space who wants to offer massage at their business will not have to seek a conditional use permit from the planning commission in order to do so. Instead, they should be able to secure approval by applying for a permit with city planning staff.

Mandelman told the *Voice* that McCurdy "gets all the credit" for accomplishing the zoning change. If she hadn't alerted his office to the issue, Mandelman said, he wouldn't have pushed to address it.

"She was obviously right, and it was obviously something we needed to fix," he said in a phone interview in late February. "We were happy to do it."

### A Boost for Small Business

Former Noe Valley resident Christine Doo, who owns Plava Bodyworks on Van Ness Avenue, told the *Voice* the more onerous rules the city had enacted last decade made it nearly impossible for massage therapists to legally work in San Francisco. The new rules, she predicted, "will definitely open the doors" for more therapeutic practices to offer bodywork and massage services.

"Chiropractic and acupuncture go really well hand-in-hand with bodywork and massage therapy. They complement each other, and people experience greater benefit from having those two together," said Doo, who in the 2010s worked for six years at FitWell Chiropractic Sports Medicine in Noe Valley.

### April Fool's to You, Dear Readers!

The flashback to the archives on page 1 proves that the *Voice* you are now reading has a history. And if you'll check out pages 23 and 24 of this edition, you'll see a review of some of the seasonal humor that has enabled us to survive, and sometimes thrive, in Noe Valley land.

## Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church

A Joyful Community of the Spirit



### Holy Week and Easter

In-Person & Interactive Online Worship



**Palm Sunday, April 10**

8 am & 10 am

**Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday**

**in Holy Week, April 11, 12, 13**

Evening Prayer at 7 pm \*

**Maundy Thursday, April 14**

Liturgy at 7 pm

**Good Friday, April 15**

Prayer & Meditation, Noon to 3 pm \*

Stay as long or as little as you like

Good Friday Liturgy at 7 pm

**Saturday, April 16**

Great Vigil of Easter at 7 pm

**Easter Sunday, April 17**

Feast of the Resurrection at 8 am & 10 am

\* Online only. All other services online & in person.

**For connection information:**

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Join us on Saturdays from 10-11 in the Parklet for Arts and Crafts for kids!