

Alenka Your Learning Kids Academy

"Mayak" is a Russian word which translates to "House of Light" in English. It is the one word that Alenka Zviarovich and husband Roman Katrychenko say they would use to describe the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of Central Florida (Florida SBDC at UCF) and the assistance it provided them with starting and growing their business.

Zviarovich and Katrychenko are the founders and owners of Alenka Your Learning Kids Academy. It is the first Russian-speaking daycare center in Orlando. The Academy uses the Russian language exclusively at the school and offers a setting where infants and children up to age 5 are exposed to the Russian food, curriculum and culture their parents grew up with.

"When we had our first child," recalls Roman Katrychenko, "we searched for a daycare built around our language and traditions. When we couldn't find one, we started our own, home-based daycare center. Word got around among the Russian émigré community in Central Florida that there was a Russian-speaking daycare center. We started getting calls right away but didn't have the space and were turning people away." It was then that Zviarovich and Katrychenko turned to the Florida SBDC at UCF and its consultant Elly Membreno. They started attending classes to learn how to start a business. They took advantage of the FSBDC's no-cost consulting from Membreno who guided them through preparing a business plan, doing their financial planning and budgeting and who answered their many questions.

"My English is not so good," says Alenka Zviarovich. "I have trouble understanding sometimes. But I could understand everything my consultant Elly said to me. She explained everything, word for word. I would come home with lists after every meeting. Roman and I would then do every step that Elly told us. We filed every form, passed every test, passed every inspection. And we opened our doors, thanks to Elly."

Since starting their work with the Florida SBDC, Zviarovich and Katrychenko have had a lot of successes. They have moved to a new location and into their own building; they completely renovated that building to house their daycare center; they have grown from caring for three children to more than 20 today, and are expecting as many as 35 in the fall; they have increased in size to 5 employees; and financially they have reached break-even and see profitability on the horizon. All in the 6 short months since Alenka Your Learning Kids Academy opened in January 2019.

"Working with the FSBDC opened our eyes wide," says Roman Katrychenko "It's a very big difference from where I was born. You help regular people at no-cost open their business."

"When I found Elly and the FSBDC, I was so excited," continued Alenka Zviarovich, "because I learned so much and saw so much opportunity. Elly is like sunshine. She showed me the light and the way to go. The FSBDC is a "Mayak" for us. It shone light on our path, told us what we needed to do and how best to do it. Thank you, Elly and the FSBDC."



ROMAN & ALENKA

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