

## **Ukrainian newcomer earns citizenship and wins award in same month**

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A woman who has faced some unexpected challenges in her life has recently received a provincial award.

Mila Wagner, a Ukrainian newcomer who arrived in Alberta in 2016 after the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, has been awarded a high honour in her provincial professional association.

The Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) presented Wagner with its inaugural CEO Award, which was the first such award in the association's 60-year history.

"It is amazing when an extremely reputable organization like ASET recognizes your hard work and gives you a chance to prove your value to the world," Wagner explained. "It was my honour to help give a leg up to people newly arrived in Canada who are wanting to work in the profession for which they were educated. Alberta is a wonderful place with a lot of opportunities for engineering technologists."

Wagner also had another big milestone achieved this spring when she became a Canadian citizen. The new citizen had been vocal about two ASET initiatives last summer for newcomers including a fee waiver for engineering technologists with refugee status and a competency-based assessment program giving foreign trained and other engineering technology professionals a faster route to establishing an Alberta career.

"Mila was given this prestigious award for her exceptional and transformative contribution to ASET as a volunteer interview subject," explained ASET CEO Barry Cavanaugh. "Her enthusiasm for and dedication to the effort knew no bounds and she was always 100 per cent committed to it."

Wagner was a single mother when she left her home in Kyiv, Ukraine to move to Alberta with her three-year-old son. Her education in Ukraine related to engineering technology but it did not transfer to Canada, and she was forced to make a living through menial work and said the ASET program would have fast-tracked her into earning designation and work in the field.

Wagner is now a technologist-in-training in civil engineering technology and is working for an engineering consulting firm.

The new Canadian citizen she is raising her son in Lethbridge and has been providing safe haven for relatives and friends escaping war zones in Ukraine. She hopes to bring her parents to Canada to escape the war.

"It is very difficult for me to deal with knowing they are in constant danger and that every day could be their last one," explained Wagner. "It is unsafe for them to leave their area because the war is all around them. I want to bring them to Canada as soon as possible and am keeping my hopes up that I will be able to do so."

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