

Dearest Marilyn and all OSO members,

July 31, 2022

My American life chapter started with your support and ended up with your good luck. On January 7, 2020, when I was in Baku airport with my family, deeply worried and excited, I received an email from my friend Marilyn: "Gunel, are you still arriving in Akron on the 7th, and what time does your plane land? My phone number to call and talk to me isYou can text me, and is there a way I can call you?" That was a considerable relief! That was hope and trust. I immediately told my family that our friends were waiting for us and would support us. We could witness that not only in words but also in action!

For two years, I saw great interest, encouragement, and "family" like help from all of you, especially my dearest friend Marilyn. Looking back, I happily remember our online and in-person meetings, conference participation, inspiring small talks with OSO members, support emails, and inspiring phone conversations with Marilyn. I would always carry in my heart her first visit to our apartment and our family visit to Dayton, to their lovely house. Yes, I heard only support, encouragement, and motivation during our talks with you, dear friend. You showed me how to be confident and raised my self-esteem. I remember our conversations about American schools, education, traditions, family ties, and how supportive you are all to newcomers. Enormous thanks for your sincerity, kindness, and charming simplicity. All these personality features are the major lessons I will take with me to Azerbaijan.

Yes, tomorrow we are going back to Azerbaijan. Baggage is ready, backpacks are waiting, and most importantly, our hearts and minds are full of beautiful memories and LOVE: love for this country, nation, and friends. Thank you all, especially dearest friend Marilyn, for everything you did for us! I cannot imagine how many lives I need to pay your kindness forward.

Thank you for being the last to talk to us, wishing us good luck and a safe flight before leaving for Azerbaijan. Still, I do not count it as the final chapter of our friendship; instead, it is a new chapter for our future meetings. I will pray to meet you again many and many times

Thank you, see you, and LOVE YOU!

Gunel