



(<http://neatoday.org/>)

News and Features from the National Education Association

ARTICLES ()

SCHOOL ME ([HTTP://NEATODAY.ORG/SCHOOL-ME/](http://neatoday.org/school-me/))

MORE NEA WEBSITES (#)

EDUCATION POLICY (/CATEGORY/EDUCATION-POLICY /) CORONAVIRUS AND SCHOOLS (/CATEGORY /CORONAVIRUS-AND-SCHOOLS/)

MARCH 25, 2020 • 11:36AM

[.#](#) [.#](#) [.#](#) [? \(#\) .\(#\)](#) [0 \(#\) .\(#\)](#)

Stuck in Poland After Travel Ban, Educators Knew Who to Call

BY TIM WALKER ([HTTP://NEATODAY.ORG/AUTHORS/TIM-WALKER](http://neatoday.org/authors/tim-walker/))



Students and educators from Monrovia, Indiana, pose for a photo in Prague.

RELATED POSTS

APRIL 15, 2020 • TIM WALKER
Social-Emotional Learning Should Be Priority During COVID-19 Crisis
(<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/15/social-emotional-learning-during-covid/>)

APRIL 13, 2020 • CINDY LONG
School Nurses Join Fight Against Coronavirus
(<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/13/school-nurses-join-fight-against-coronavirus/>)

APRIL 13, 2020 • BRENDA ÁLVAREZ
NEA's First-Ever Virtual Dance Party Lifts Educator Spirits (<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/13/neas-first-ever-virtual-dance-party-lifts-educator-spirits/>)

APRIL 7, 2020 • BRENDA ÁLVAREZ
How Innovative Educators Are Engaging Students Online (<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/07/pandemic->)

On March 13, Kim Fidler, a UniServ director for the [Indiana State Teachers Association \(ISTA\)](https://www.ista-in.org) (<https://www.ista-in.org>), was finishing up an early morning meeting with local education support professionals in Terre Haute. Schools across the state were about to close due to the coronavirus outbreak, and Fidler was reassuring educators about some of the quickly approaching challenges.

Fidler's typically busy day was about to get a lot more eventful.

Walking outside after the meeting at around 8:20 am, she received an alarming text from friend and ISTA member Robin Robinson.

“*Kim, we are on a school trip to Europe and we are stuck in Poland! We have a flight out of Frankfurt on Sunday but can't get a flight there! We've been trying for two days. Borders are closed, Lufthansa doesn't pick up and our tour group is not finding us a flight. We think they are waiting for us to book flights ourselves so they don't have to pay the higher prices. Can you help put pressure on them by calling your contacts in government and at ISTA? Thanks.*
Robin Robinson

Robinson is a social studies teacher in the Monroe-Gregg School District in Monrovia, roughly 25 miles southwest of Indianapolis. She was one of 20 adults accompanying a group of 20 students, ages 12-18, on a 10-day tour of Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. On Friday, when the group was in Krakow, the Trump administration, in response to the coronavirus outbreak, announced a ban on flights to the U.S. from Europe.

Robinson's group was scheduled to catch a flight home from

pedagogy-educators-engage-students-online/

📅 APRIL 6, 2020 • CINDY LONG
NEA Member Connections Help Sustain Educators During Crisis
(<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/06/nea-member-connections-help-sustain-educators-during-crisis/>)

CONNECT WITH

neatoday



(<https://www.facebook.com>

/neatoday)



(<https://twitter.com>

/neatoday)



(<http://www.pinterest.com>

/neatoday)



(<http://instagram.com>

/neatoday/)



(feed/)

Frankfurt, Germany (via a connecting flight in Budapest) on Sunday, March 15th. Suddenly, as borders began to close, the group was facing the possibility of being stranded in Poland.

“We all got woken up at 3 a.m. by phone calls from home, saying ‘you need to get out of there.’ So we packed up and were ready to go at a moment’s notice,” Robinson recalls.

The Czech republic was closing its border, cutting off access to Budapest, and other flights were being cancelled. As routes to Frankfurt were being cut off, the group became increasingly concerned. Their tour company wasn’t able to provide concrete plans on how to proceed.

“Initially, we were thinking that we might be stuck there for up to 30 days. We didn’t like what we were hearing from the tour group. So we had to take matters in our own hands. We just had to start making phone calls.”

Robinson knew Kim Fidler when Fidler had been a UniServ director for ISTA members in the Monrovia area a few years before.

“Kim was always someone who could make some waves. That’s why I texted her on Friday,” Robinson said. “All the teachers in the group are all union members. So they were all behind this. We knew ISTA could get things done.”

Fidler responded quickly to Robinson’s text and soon became the main point of contact for the group, relaying information from Robinson to individuals who were in a position to help get the group across the border into Germany, including members of Indiana’s congressional delegation and the National Education Association (<http://www.nea.org>).

“Marc Egan [NEA director of government relations] and his staff got very involved,” said Fidler. “They communicated

neaToday EXPRESS Get the latest NEA news and features delivered twice a month to your inbox!

neaToday FOR TABLETS

Click here

(<http://www.nea.org/neaTodayapp>) to read our latest print issue on your iPad!

RECENT POSTS

 APRIL 15, 2020 • TIM WALKER
Social-Emotional Learning Should Be Priority During COVID-19 Crisis
(<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/15/social-emotional-learning-during-covid/>)

 APRIL 13, 2020 • CINDY LONG
School Nurses Join Fight Against Coronavirus
(<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/13/school-nurses-join-fight-against-coronavirus/>)

 APRIL 13, 2020 • BRENDA ÁLVAREZ
NEA’s First-Ever Virtual Dance Party Lifts Educator Spirits (<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/13/neas-first-ever-virtual-dance-party-lifts-educator-spirits/>)

 APRIL 7, 2020 • BRENDA ÁLVAREZ



Teacher Robin Robinson was interviewed by an Indiana TV station while waiting to leave Poland.

with Senator Mike Braun's office in Washington, who got in touch with the embassy in Germany to help facilitate the transportation to get the group across the border and get them to Frankfurt. Whatever it took – trains, planes, or automobiles.”

Or, as it turned out, buses. By Saturday, the group had made it to a city called Wroclaw, roughly 100 miles east of the German border. The task was getting them across the border.

“Once that happened we were confident that they could get to Frankfurt for their Sunday morning flight,” said Fidler. “But I was always checking in to see if they had enough money, were somewhere they could charge the phone, and that the kids were doing well. They were all exhausted.”

Senator Braun's office worked with the embassy in Germany to arrange a bus to take the group across the border to Gorlitz, and then another to Frankfurt on the evening of the 14th – on schedule to make their 10:45 am flight to Chicago's O'Hare airport the following day.

After the group touched down on March 15th, representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and

How Innovative Educators Are Engaging Students Online (<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/07/pandemic-pedagogy-educators-engage-students-online/>)

APRIL 6, 2020 • CINDY LONG
NEA Member Connections Help Sustain Educators During Crisis (<http://neatoday.org/2020/04/06/nea-member-connections-help-sustain-educators-during-crisis/>)

CATEGORIES

Select Category

Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>) took each person's temperature. Although no one displayed any symptoms, they were told to self-quarantine for two weeks. Taking a charter bus from O'Hare, the group finally arrived in Indiana by 9 p.m. Sunday night.

"Everyone – Senator Braun, ISTA, and NEA – worked together," said Fidler. "It was a great collaborative effort. When she arrived home, I told Robin, 'When you have problems, you can always turn to the union. We're there to help you!'"

Robinson's self-quarantine ends on Sunday, March 29th. But she's been keeping busy helping Monrovia students adjust to the school closures, which will last until May 1, perhaps longer. She wasn't allowed to enter the school building, so colleagues dropped off her laptop, grade book, and other items on her porch.

"I'm on the school leadership team," Robinson said. "We're a small community in a rural area, and many kids don't have access to the Internet at home. So we have work to do to help our students. I'm happy to be back and in the swing of things."

[.#](#)
[.#](#)
[.#](#)
[? \(#\)](#)
[.#](#)
[\(\)](#)
[.#](#)

POSTED IN

Education Policy: ([http://neatoday.org/category](http://neatoday.org/category/education-policy/)

/education-policy/) Coronavirus and Schools

(<http://neatoday.org/category/coronavirus-and-schools/>)

POST TAGS: coronavirus and schools

(<http://neatoday.org/tag/coronavirus-and-schools/>),

Indiana State Teachers Association ([http://neatoday.org](http://neatoday.org/tag/indiana-state-teachers-association/)

/tag/indiana-state-teachers-association/), kim fidler

(<http://neatoday.org/tag/kim-fidler/>), monrovia students

(http://neatoday.org/tag/monrovia-students/), robin robinson (http://neatoday.org/tag/robin-robinson/)

Comments Community   Avata

 Recommend 1  Tweet  Share

Sort by Best ▾

 **NEA Today requires you to verify your email address before posting. [Send verification email to](#)** 

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

[ABOUT NEATODAY.ORG \(/ABOUT/\)](#)
[NEA PRIVACY POLICY \(HTTP://WWW.NEA.ORG/HOME/829.HTM\)](http://www.nea.org/home/829.htm)
[TERMS OF USE \(HTTP://WWW.NEA.ORG/HOME/821.HTM\)](http://www.nea.org/home/821.htm)



COPYRIGHT © 2020 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ([HTTP://WWW.NEA.ORG](http://www.nea.org)).
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.