

HMAVIEWPOINT

Hobby industry support for Ukrainian refugees



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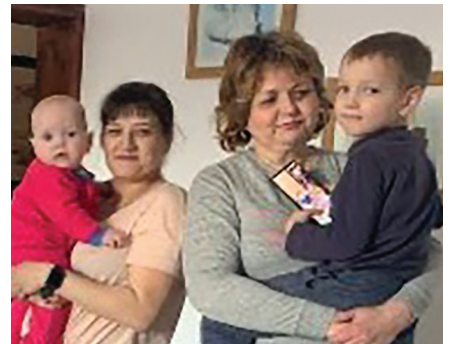
With generous support from the HMA, NRSNA, NMRA (HUB Division) and many hobby-related companies and individuals, significant aid has been rendered to Ukrainian refugees residing in and around Wolsztyn, Poland.

To date, a total of \$84,000 (the rough equivalent of 369,600 Polish Zlotys depending on the exchange rate) has been raised for the direct benefit of the Ukrainian refugees.

It started small in the town of Wolsztyn, Poland, where Howard Jones and his wife, Alex, asked themselves, "What can we do to help?" You may not know them by name, but steam locomotive fans have heard of their charitable organization, "The Wolsztyn Experience." The organization, located in Poland, enables British and American railfans (and others) to come to Wolsztyn for a one-week, course in driving and firing high-speed, steam-passenger locomotives.

Howard and Alex wanted to help not just one or two families but the dozens of mothers and their children in need. Howard reached out to several of his Wolsztyn Experience friends for donations, including Stan Ames, who would later become the Ukraine Support Fund Agent for the NMRA's HUB Division. With this initial seed money for food, clothing, medicine and a lease on a vacant house, Alex contacted the Polish relief effort and told them they could accept four families. The first family arrived two days later, a young mother with a five-year-old girl and an eight-year-old boy. The house now accommodates five small groups.

After helping a few families, it became clear the idea of renting additional houses was not scalable due to the vast number of refugees needing support and a housing shortage. The Poland team is looking into upgrading an unused summer camp to make the existing housing livable. This could provide housing for an additional 60 families. In the meantime, to help fill refugee service gaps, the Ukraine Support Fund is currently supporting the following:



Medical costs. Funding for several doctors providing direct services to refugees.

Food support. Working with the facilities housing refugees to identify and supply needed food.

Ukraine orphanages. Two Ukrainian orphanages have been set up in the greater Wolsztyn area. The team in Poland is working directly with both groups to determine how to support them beyond the supply of toys that has already been given.

Emotional support. The refugee families are traumatized and scared. As a welcome break for the kids, The Wolsztyn Experience ran a free charter steam train excursion and picnic for approximately 300 Ukrainians on Saturday, April 16. There were inflatable bouncy houses and entertainment at one end of the route with a substantial picnic and additional entertainment at the opposite end of the route. The smiles and laughter from the children were amazing and the parents had a great time as well. I was personally able to participate in this event as it coincided with my own pandemic-postponed trip to Poland for the Wolsztyn Experience with Stan Ames. Seeing the refugees and thinking about the hardships they have, and will, experience was incredibly humbling.

While the train excursion was a great day, there sadly remains significant housing, medical and food needs for the refugees. Because no one knows when this will all be over, the Poland team has reserved about half of the funds so the refugee support can continue over the next six to nine months. Should you wish to make a donation now to enhance and extend the effort, please visit <https://www.hubdiv.org/ukraine.html>

On behalf of the HUB Division Ukraine Support Fund, a huge thank you goes to all our friends in the world of hobbies for making a difference with this direct support of the Ukrainian refugees. **HM**



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