

This has been an interesting week. The events that set it in motion began more than a month ago. ~ Bob Price

Like most Americans, Kathy and I watched in real time as Russian forces crossed the borders of Russia and Belaruse and invaded neighboring Ukraine. Also, like most Americans, we thought at it was just a matter of time until the entire country would be overrun and the government would be dismantled. We were wrong.

While millions of Ukrainians fled the bombing and resettled in neighboring countries, the Ukrainian army fought Putin's forces to a standstill, and are now counterattacking.

Kathy wanted to help. She reached out to kind people across the country who have always stepped up in the past to be an important part of the Mission of Love.

Dr. Marta Davidovich Ockuly, of Florida helped to facilitate efforts with the Pokrova Ukrainian Greco Orthodox church in Parma, Ohio to accept Mission of Love donated supplies and to take responsibility for insuring that they were transported either to the refugees in Poland, or to Ukraine itself. At Pokrova, many Ukrainian American volunteers sort the donations and forward them to where they need to be.

Luana Rubin, of Boulder, Colorado is the founder and owner of eQuilter.com. She is always on the front lines of the effort to bring love and comfort to those who need it most. She readily volunteered to use her on-line platform to reach out to the quilting community to donate hand made and custom made quilts to the Mission of Love, so that these could be hand delivered to mothers and children who had left all of their belongings behind when they fled the violence in their country. Many of these quilts are blue and yellow, the national colors of Ukraine. As of today, 260 comfort quilts have been received from across the nation and delivered to Pokrova Ukrainian Church in Parma, Ohio.



Calls of compassion went out from the Mission of Love office in an extra bedroom in our home and soon wonderfully generous people responded. Thousands of dollars in medical and health care supplies came from Nina and Dave. They were loaded into the back of the MOL truck and van and delivered to Pokrova. Thousands of dollars were spent to purchase the necessary humanitarian aid to be sent to Poland for the refugees. \$1000 was given to help with the transportation of the comfort quilts to Ukraine.

Kathy received a donation of 16,000 pounds of rice. Off they went to Pokrova in a 53' trailer. Non perishable food purchased at discount prices from surplus grocery stores in Middlefield, Ohio are boxed and delivered along with shoes, winter clothing, sheets, towels, etc etc etc. were delivered.

Our home has become a warehouse for the deliveries that arrive hourly from the quilting community. Our living room is stacked high with cardboard boxes. So far Kathy has packaged 260 comfort quilts, each and every one of these gifts of love in an individual plastic encasing so that the recipient will feel special when it is handed to them.

My small part in this is to keep Kathy company as she goes about her rounds. I have been so lucky to be able to go with her to the gathering center at Pokrova when she hands the donations to Ukrainian Americans who then sort and transfer the goods to either Chicago where they are placed on airplanes to be flown to Europe, or to an embarkation point where they are placed in containers to be sent to Poland.

Our contact in Parma is a young man named Oleksandr. He is a specialist in logistics. He is extremely grateful and helpful. He is also in constant contact with his connections in Ukraine. He told us that the rice that had been delivered only days before was placed in a container and shipped by train to Norfolk, Virginia. From there it would be placed on a container ship and sent to Poland. In Poland, the government would turn it over to Ukrainians without the red tape normally associated with customs and it would be taken to Ukraine to feed hungry people.

There were tears when we delivered the comfort quilts. The men who unloaded our van were stoic. The women told us that mothers would wrap their babies in these quilts and hold them close, giving them warmth. They cried.

Last week, Kathy told Oleksandra that she had pallets of supplies stored at the Mission of Love warehouse at the Ravenna Arsenal. He offered to bring a 53 foot tractor trailer to pick them up. I don't think that he knew what to expect.

We met at the front gate of the Arsenal and cleared security. We drove through a wooded area to the warehouse that Kathy leases from the Department of Defense. There is no electric light available or heat available, so we went into a very large and very dark building. Kathy fired up her generator and the lights came on. The looks on the faces of the three men from Parma was something to behold. They were told to pick out whatever they needed. There were wheel chairs, walkers, pallets of diapers, medical supplies and bolts and bolts of fabric. There was one box on a pallet that contained fire department turn out gear. Olek told us that he had been searching for this type of equipment and wanted to buy it, because in his country the fire departments were overwhelmed and citizens were being trained to fight fires. The men loaded the turnout gear onto the trailer. By the time that they departed two hours later, the trailer was packed.

That afternoon, Kathy made a call to a retired fire chief from our town who is also a close friend. He reached out to the current fire chief and told him of the need for fire fighting equipment in Ukraine. He promised that there would be a shout out to local fire departments in four neighboring counties who would be able to donate used, but serviceable equipment. I can't wait to come home next week to see what is sitting in my living room.



The entire point of this little essay is to tell you that you might think that there are terrible things happening in the world that you can't control. You can't heal the world, but you can touch the hands that are within your reach. I have just told you how the lives of thousands of victims of war are going to be improved because Americans who have never met them and never will, have reached out to help.

If you want to be involved in your own way, no matter how small, you can contact Kathy at www.missionoflove.org.

Or donate via Mission of Love's GoFundMe page: <https://gofund.me/9398900c>