

After Kharkiv Close Call, American Aid Workers Promise Return to Help Ukrainian Children

The close call marked a dramatic moment for the 12th humanitarian convoy led by the New Hampshire-based nonprofit Common Man for Ukraine.

BOSTON, MA, UNITED STATES, April 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Roughly 10 minutes after a group of American aid workers left a central square in Ukraine's besieged city of Kharkiv, Russian forces launched a deadly attack on that very square.

The close call marked a dramatic moment for the 12th humanitarian convoy led by the New Hampshire-based nonprofit [Common Man for Ukraine](#), the four volunteers recounted as they traveled home Friday and pledged to return for a 13th trip.



Common Man for Ukraine distributes food and supplies in a southeastern Ukrainian village during its March-April 2025 convoy.

“While we made it to safety, innocent Ukrainians were killed and many were wounded,” said Common Man for Ukraine co-founder Lisa Mure. “We hear air raid sirens a lot on our convoys, but it’s really become white noise for most Ukrainians. For the next hour or two after leaving the square, we heard both loud sirens and explosions. We knew pretty quickly that this time was different.”

“

Hundreds of people were lined up waiting for us to arrive, waiting desperately for the food. There’s no time to be afraid.”

Susan Mathison, Common Man for Ukraine

Still, Common Man for Ukraine and its Polish Rotary partners continued with their relief deliveries the following day as planned. This trip, the volunteers delivered more

than 64,000 pounds of food, solar lanterns, clothes, generators, and additional supplies to more than 5,000 children and their families spread throughout 16 villages in the Kharkiv Oblast in

southeastern Ukraine.

“It’s a sobering experience,” co-founder Susan Mathison said of her 12th mission in the war zone. “As soon as we got out of our vans at the very first village the next morning, the air raid sirens were blaring again. But there’s no time to be afraid. Hundreds of people were lined up waiting for us to arrive, waiting desperately for the food. There’s no time to be afraid.”

The grassroots nonprofit launched its efforts shortly after Russia’s all-out invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 as a special initiative of the Plymouth Rotary Foundation in New Hampshire. Co-founder Alex Ray, the New Hampshire restaurateur who turns 80 this month and has led all 12 physically demanding trips, launched the mission with a \$1 million donation.

Common Man for Ukraine has since delivered more than 4 million pounds of food, 10,000 sleeping bags, and hundreds of diesel generators to Ukrainian orphanages, child safe houses, and villages. Thousands of Americans from across the country provide donations large and small to fuel these programs, leading to the distribution of more than \$4 million in aid. The organization focuses on supporting Ukrainian children of war and their families.

Several trips back, the co-founders even started bringing hundreds of Beanie Babies along to gift to each child.

“We’re floored by the children’s smiles every time we hand them this small token of love,” Mathison said. “And that’s what we do: we bring food, supplies, and love.”



A Ukrainian girl hugs her new stuffed animal, gifted to her by Common Man for Ukraine.



Common Man for Ukraine

Youth mental healthcare quickly became a focus of Common Man for Ukraine's work early in the war after interacting with the children living in orphanages and safe houses suffering from deep traumas.

The nonprofit expanded an existing Rotary program that provides residential trauma counseling to children of fallen Ukrainian soldiers in monthly, 3-week-long sessions in Zakopane, Poland. Each session of the Children of Ukraine Health Retreat welcomes 30-35 children, engaging in group and individual counseling, art and physical therapy, and outings that enable the kids to feel like kids again. More than 1,000 Ukrainian children count themselves as alumni of the program.

A United Nations Human Rights Office report released in March estimated that the war that's followed Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine has resulted in 737,000 internally displaced children and an additional 1.7 million child refugees. The UN report estimates at least 669 children were killed through the end of 2024, with thousands more kidnapped and "re-educated" to become Russian.

"This absolutely reinforces the mission," Mure said. "Ukraine didn't deserve this. They didn't ask for this. It was completely unjust and unprovoked, and they have to live with that every day."

In 2025, Common Man for Ukraine launched its [Seeds of Hope Campaign](#) – a \$6 million fundraising initiative designed to respond to the evolving needs of the war-torn nation. Once funded, Seeds of Hope will provide enough funding to continue the trauma counseling retreats and food convoys, while creating a new counseling program for child retreat alumni, a new online portal for peer and professional mental healthcare for Ukrainian children and caregivers, and establishing the Rebuild Ukraine Fund to provide support to families.

Full details on Common Man for Ukraine's Seeds of Hope Campaign can be found online at commonmanforukraine.org/case-statement, while tax-deductible donations can be made at commonmanforukraine.org.

About Common Man for Ukraine

Common Man for Ukraine is an initiative of the New Hampshire-based nonprofit organization Plymouth Rotary Foundation, 501c3 EIN 59-3841932. The grassroots, volunteer-run organization delivers humanitarian aid, including food and generators, and trauma counseling to Ukrainian orphans, displaced children, and families struggling to survive this war. Donations fuel the nonprofit's work. Monetary, stock, DAF, and additional types of donation information can be found online at commonmanforukraine.org, and are welcome by check sent to: Common Man for Ukraine, 71 Main Street, Plymouth, NH 03264 USA

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