**Ukrainian Colleague Interviews**

Conducted by Xenia Parker, Sr. Program Manager, HBS Online

Our interviewees chose to remain anonymous, due safety concerns for friends and relatives.

Two days before the invasion when Putin said Ukraine's Donbass region supported Russia was the first time I got really scared. That night I had dinner with my Russian best friend, and called my uncle and friends. They confirmed that the airports in Eastern Ukraine got bombed. I could not sleep for a week and half.

In the town where I grew up sirens sound when air strikes or shootings are 30 miles away, but it takes 15-20 minutes to run to a shelter. Sometimes when the sirens sound my relatives hide in the basement and sometimes in the bathroom, which has thicker walls. The first week of the invasion my friends and family stayed home. On the second week city employees of communication and water plants were asked to return to work. Sometimes I think I worry more than they do.

I am a Business Analyst and compared Ukraine’s power to Putin's military strength. I could not see how Ukraine might win. My initial thought was “we have to give in.” I mentioned this to my relatives and everyone got so mad at me. Even my 82-year-old great aunt, who was a child during WW2, said that we are not going to lose. I am impressed with the fierce spirit of my family, who would rather die than fall to a dictatorship. We talk daily, but I only check the news for military activity closer to my village. The war helps see problems from a different angle.

Our interviewee recommended the following charitable organizations:

• <https://www.cashforrefugees.org> was founded by Ukrainians from Boston and gives 100% of the donations directly to the Ukrainian refugees

• <http://www.uahospitals.org/> supports hospitals in Ukraine

These days instead of morning coffee I check in with my relatives. The hardest part was to convince my aunt to leave, to take responsibility for saving her child’s life. She is now driving towards Poland. My handicapped father did not want to hold them behind, so he stayed. My family could not believe what was happening. They kept saying it was safe, even when the bombs were exploding two T-stops away. A friend of ours was in denial for almost 3 weeks, but packed up his family when an apartment complex next door was blown up.

We are grateful to everyone who has come together to help. My cousin had 10 days of insulin left and I found volunteers in Newton who sourced a 6 month supply, which was donated by the Tufts Medical Center. People from Poland, Belorussia, Germany, Estonia and other countries are using their own money and cars to drive supplies to those in need.

It’s strange and ironic, because I am Ukrainian and my husband is Russian. Our Ukrainian friends have Russian blood, our Russian friends are part Ukrainian. No one wants war. We cry at night, have childcare responsibilities, try to find solutions, volunteer, and come to work with a smile. Our lives are not in danger, but if we stop watching the news we are in danger of falling into denial.

The local organization mentioned in this article can be found here: <https://www.sunflowerofpeace.com/> they provide medical supplies to rescue workers in Ukraine.

There are also a few folks on Facebook who can help directly, if you need to reach out:

* Lena Kolker, helps orphans in Odesa get money for food and supplies
* Yana Brodskiy connects volunteers with medical supplies
* Natasha Sky helps with supplies and ammunition