

Helping Our Ukrainian Friends



Summer 2025 Update

Since February 2022, Helping Our Ukrainian Friends has been working with Ukrainian communities in Britain, Poland and Ukraine to provide support to families and communities affected by Russia's brutal invasion of their country.

On 21 June we completed our 23rd and 24th projects – our fourth Summer Camp for Ukrainian war widows in Poland, and our 20th delivery of humanitarian aid. As well as these 24 major projects HOUF has

supported many individual families and communities with one off donations and gifts, including over 2000 Gift Boxes for children, guitars and other musical instruments, drone detectors, generators, microwaves, fridges, wheelchairs, heart valves and other medical equipment.

Tragically the need for our support shows no sign of diminishing. There seems little prospect of a meaningful peace anytime soon, as President Putin seems to believe more in the power of his armed forces than in compromise and conciliation. The heaviest air attacks in the war have taken place in recent weeks, as the Russians continue to try to bomb

Ukraine into submission. Many of our friends in Ukraine send us photos of explosions, of missiles flying across their cities, of them sheltering in bunkers. Their weariness is only too clear. But so is their resilience and determination. They, rightly, don't see any prospect of peace with Putin.

Since our last newsletter in December 2024, HOUF has completed three more major projects. A delivery of 4x4 vehicles in March, the Summer Camp in June and the most recent collection of aid and donations, also delivered in June.

This newsletter gives a roundup of our work in the first six months of the year.

4x4s to Kyiv

In March, four HOUF volunteers, Richard Astle, Dave Ribakovs, Tony Bovill and Mark Asplin flew out to Bucharest and met up with our charity partner, Dylan Owen of Sustain Ukraine. Dylan had used HOUF funds sent out in advance to purchase two 4x4 vehicles, which the team picked up and drove to the Ukrainian border the next day. At least that was the plan, until Dave and Tony managed to destroy the clutch on one vehicle and

we had to leave it behind for what we hoped at best would be overnight repairs. Astonishingly, we were able to find a garage, have a new clutch fitted, drive back to pick it up (a nice 5 hour round trip on top of 8 hours already driven) and be back at the hotel on the border by midnight!

We crossed the border without incident early the next morning and met up with some of our oldest friends, The Annas from Kharkiv, who now live in Chernivtsi. We first met Anna Kuzenko at Summer Camp in 2022. She and her friend Anna are both English teachers. They fled Kharkiv at the start of the war and ended up living in a school in Chernivtsi for many months. They currently teach their classes online with pupils joining them



Delivering the VW to Kyiv – Richard and Mark

from around the world, depending on their place of refuge. Our journey took us on to Kyiv, where we handed the vehicles over to military units. A Nissan X-Trail for the 241st Territorial Defence Brigade and a Volkswagen T5 Transporter for the 412th Regiment Unmanned Systems.

These were the sixth and seventh vehicles we have delivered to Ukraine. We also took the chance to meet up with our partners at Sustain Ukraine, Cross Charity and From Person to Person. After one night in Kyiv, with an air raid siren failing to wake us from our sleep, we travelled back to Poland by train.



HOUF volunteers in Kyiv with Cross Charity and From Person to Person.

Summer Camp 2025.

HOUF supported its first Summer Camp in 2022, helping to fund and volunteering at a camp for over 160 Ukrainian children who were taking refuge in Poland. We supported a day-camp that summer too and since then have supported

three more residential camps. This year the Camp was held from 14-21 June. Thanks to donations from the Friends of Chernobyl's Children charity and from many private individuals we were able to fund over 50% of the costs of the camp

and send five volunteers (all of whom paid their own flights, hotels etc) to help look after the Ukrainian families. Many thanks to Liz Symonds, Bob Bennett, Richard Astle, Rachel Bovill and Sasha Newby.

The organisers of the camp sent this message to us all:

To the entire HOUF team, On behalf of our entire team and every family who attended, we want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this camp possible. 28 widows and 53 children came from cities like Irpin, Kyryvyi Rig, Vinnytsia, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Rivne, Ternopil, a family that used to have Bakhmut as their

hometown and other smaller and larger towns all over Ukraine.

Thanks to your support we were able to offer a week of healing, rest and joy to widows of war and their children. With the help of

psychologists, the women received personal and group therapy. Families enjoyed floristry, art classes, sports activities, horse riding and peaceful evenings around the bonfire. We shared special moments like a dinner out at a local restaurant, a relaxing spa



HOUF volunteer, Bob Bennett, with Olga, Olena and Galya – teachers and organisers at the Summer Camp



HOUF Volunteer, Sasha Newby, with Ukrainian children at the summer camp

day and a beautiful closing concert just for the Mums.

Your generosity gave these women and children more than just activities, it gave them a sense of hope, dignity and community. Thank you for being part of something so meaningful. We are deeply grateful. With appreciation, Organisers of the Camp, Kasia Rojewska and Galya Mokryk.

Drive Out – June 2025.

Throughout April and May, the HOUF team collected donations for their 20th delivery to Ukraine.

Despite limited media coverage, public support remains strong. With more donation points and volunteers than ever, we filled five vans—our biggest convoy to date.

Thanks to Tina Ashman for lending her shed in Maxey, we quickly filled it with tinned food, sanitary items,

medicines, clothes, walking frames, and 24 wheelchairs from a Sandbach recycling centre. Toys, games, and musical instruments were also donated for displaced children.

Our drivers included two Princebuild directors (our main donors) and several new volunteers, all tackling the 1,100-mile, two-day journey. Led by Richard Stoddart, the trip hit a bump when a tyre burst on a Belgian motorway.



After repairs, the team overnighted in Meissen, Germany, before arriving at the Summer Camp to a warm welcome from Ukrainian families.

This show of solidarity—both emotional and practical—meant the world to them. The supplies were swiftly transferred to a Ukrainian lorry and, within three days, delivered to front-line communities by our partners at Sustain Ukraine.



Unloading the vans in Poland, HOUF with our Polish, Ukrainian and American partners

Cross and From Person to Person

Over the last six months we have continued our work with Cross and From Person to Person, two charities based in Kyiv, which we were introduced to by Ukrainians living in the UK.

HOUF has donated **£8,250** to Cross Charity this year.

Cross Charity regularly travel to just behind the front lines in the Donbas where they set up a field kitchen by the side of the road. Here they prepare huge cauldrons of food for soldiers and the wider community, making a traditional Ukrainian dish called Bognach. It involves large amounts of meat, lots of red peppers and some very large wooden spoons. Do check out the Facebook page to see some of the videos of their work – not only the preparation of the food, but also the vast quantities of food and supplies bought in Kyiv using money donated by our supporters in the UK.

Cross Charity is a Christian organisation and as well as food for the body, they also provide food for the soul, with priests joining them at the kitchen to offer counsel and comfort to the soldiers. No wonder



Cross Charity dishing up bognach to Ukrainian soldiers

the soldiers have nicknamed Natallia, who leads the charity's work, Angel.

From Person to Person are a similar charity to Cross, although they don't have the big cauldrons. They do, however, travel regularly to front line communities and deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid. The charity has sent us a marvellous presentation summarising all their work that your donations have enabled. Some examples are

Thanks to this help we were able

- To be in Kramatorsk over the weekend, bought the necessary hygiene products and other important products. Distributed them to 150 families of displaced people from Toretsk.
- To hold the collective psychological training for the teachers of Toretsk, who were evacuated to Irpin.
- To deliver to the village of Pokrovske hygiene products including laundry detergent, shower gel, shampoo, liquid soap, dishwashing liquid, toilet cleaner and toothpaste (150 units each). Sweet gift sets for children (222 Units).



The team at From Person to Person

HUGS and Sustain Ukraine

HUGS is a Canadian charity active in Kharkiv, running a vehicle repair workshop that supports local military units and, since December 2022, the SMART Kids programme (Sport, Music, Art, Recreation, and Technology).

SMART Kids works with internally displaced children in Kharkiv and nearby communities in Eastern Ukraine.

On 6 February, a Shahed drone struck the SMART Kids site. HOUF quickly allocated £2,000 in emergency funding to help restart the programme, followed by £4,200 in June to support it through the rest of 2025.

We've partnered with Dylan and Max at Sustain Ukraine since December 2023, when we delivered two ambulances for use by Ukrainian medical units. Sustain Ukraine has strong ties to communities and military units, enabling fast humanitarian aid delivery from their base in Kyiv. Dylan, based in Bucharest, sources 4x4 vehicles in Romania for transport into Ukraine.

Working with Sustain, we've also provided essential non-lethal equipment to medical and military units, including Ecoflows, drone detectors, and vacuum wound sealers.



After delivering supplies to the Poland camp on 18 June, a Ukrainian driver transported them to the Sustain depot in Kyiv. By 21 June, the joint Sustain/HOUF van had reached Dnipro, delivering aid to the local Internally Displaced Persons Centre.



Sustain Ukraine delivering the HOUF supplies in Dnipro, June 2025

Fundraising

Since January 2025, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we have raised £75,000 to support our work. In total since the Russian invasion, we have raised over £410K.

A large part of this year's fundraising has been thanks to our amazing friends at Princebuild, who have donated more than half of our total funds so far this year – making a real

difference to what we can achieve. The fundraising came through two main events – an amazing charity auction at Mattoni's on 20 March, which raised nearly £20,000 and the Lincoln 10K run, which raised £30,000! The charity auction was a huge success, both financially and in terms of entertainment, with some wonderful singing by Nicole Lawrence,

great hosting by Kev Lawrence and who can ever forget Barry Fry's ability to sell the same auction prize twice – for £2500 each! The Lincoln 10Km was a similar success, with over 70 Princebuild runners and the joy of passing the finishing line, knowing that Mark Asplin, Princebuild Director was still right behind!

continued ...

We are incredibly grateful to Princebuild for all their support – which goes way beyond just money. As well as these two events, they have continually promoted our work on their own social media, arranged interviews on Peterborough Community Radio and also supplied the vans and the fuel for the June drive out to Poland, as well as two drivers.

Thank you Mark, Dale, Matthew and Carly – and everyone at Princebuild.

Not everyone can fund-raise on that scale, but our supporters make a difference in so many ways throughout the year. The Stamford Ukrainian Ladies held an enjoyable race night at Burghley Golf Club and raised enough money to buy one of the 4x4s that was delivered in March. Carolyn Browse held her annual cake and crafts fayre in April. Entertain for Ukraine, organised by the Rotary Club

of Dronfield and the HOUF Northern Team raised over £3000. Fiona Parker braved the elements at Rock on the Rec in Stamford on 6 July.

Separately a group of dedicated private individuals continue to donate confidentially and regularly to our funds – we are very grateful to them all.

We are also very grateful to the following for their donations

- Earl Fitzwilliam Charitable Fund
- Inner Wheel of the Deepings
- Nataliia's Dream Restaurant
- GB Liners
- Liz Hepworth and the Rotary Club of Dronfield
- Zirka Ukraine
- Mountain Warehouse, Stamford
- Woven Chords
- Maxey Dancers
- Liz Symonds – whose card sales have now raised nearly £5000 for our work!

What next.

In August, we'll deliver three more 4x4s to Ukraine, bringing HOUF's total to ten. A six-person team, including three new volunteers, will make the drive.

In November, another team will return to support our partners and deliver further financial aid.

We're also planning a UK collection in October-November, with a December lorry delivery to Kyiv for Christmas. We'll collect food, toys, medical supplies, warm clothes, batteries, torches, and hygiene items.

To help fund it all, Princebuild is hosting a charity Bling in October. Our fundraising team also has events planned, including an abseil on 16 August and a garden party on 30 August in Ashton – all supporters welcome!

Thank you to the people of Ukraine – heroes defending freedom and democracy.

Key facts.

Since the beginning of 2025 until 30 June HOUF has

- Raised £75,000
- Made 3 trips to Poland/Ukraine
- Delivered 2 more 4x4s to the Ukrainian military (total now 7)
- Delivered over 6 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- Donated £18,000 and 5 volunteers to Summer Camp
- Gave £8,250 each to From Person to Person and Cross Charity
- Donated £8,500 to Sustain Ukraine and £3,500 to Pastor Aleksander
- Contributed £6,200 to HUGS in Kharkiv for their SMART Kids programme and missile damage repair
- Supplied essentials to displaced families in Chernivtsi
- Helped fund the Warrior's Retreat PTSD centre
- Funded online lessons for Lisa, Nastia, and their mother Elena in Poland
- Donated instruments and games to a Kharkiv kindergarten
- Continued supplying heart valves to Kyiv Heart Institute
- Delivered free English lessons to 2023-24 Summer Camp alumni
- Expanded social media reach with help from our media guru, Marc Kukh

Thank you.

To everyone who has donated, financially or materially, and to all our volunteers who give their time and emotional energy to help the people of Ukraine. To all the teachers and volunteers in the Summer Camp team led by Kashia Rojewska and her family. To Galya and Igor Mokryk and their beautiful daughters, Vlada, Sola and Yana, without whose patient help and impeccable translations, we wouldn't be able to get any of this work done. And to all the charities and partners we work with in Ukraine, particularly Cross, Pastor Aleksander, Sustain Ukraine, HUGS and From Person to Person.



The twins, Lisa and Nastia enjoy a trip to Krakow with HOUF volunteer Rachel Bovill

We're also very grateful to Sam Carling MP for Northwest Cambridgeshire for his support and for mentioning us in the House of Commons!

But above all THANK YOU to the people of Ukraine, who are fighting for our freedom, our democratic values and our way of life. They are our heroes.

Contact and Support HOUF.

You can contact us directly by email – chair@helpingourukrainianfriends.com or through the website – www.helpingourukrainianfriends.com



And you can follow our work on our Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/HOUF2022>

We are always looking for more volunteers to help with fundraising, opening new donation points and driving.

And, of course, we are always grateful for financial donations, which you can make through our Just Giving page – <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/helpingourukrainianfriends2023>

Please be aware, HOUF is not a registered charity. We are a group of likeminded people working together to help Ukraine.

