PROFILE

Jake Cummings
Canadian Red Cross Fundraiser

Creative Fundraisers
Helping Those in Ukraine

When conflict arose in Ukraine and surrounding countries in early 2022, Canadians wasted no time supporting the Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal.

Thanks to the generosity of people living in Canada, the Canadian Red Cross has contributed $98 million (as of July 2022) to the International Red Cross response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and surrounding countries. As of July 2022, this support has contributed to the Red Cross collectively reaching more than 3.75 million people with humanitarian support in Ukraine and surrounding countries.

Did you know? If you connect with the Canadian Red Cross prior to starting your fundraiser, we can help you, including providing you with a personal donation web page?

Here are some amazing examples of how people across Canada have been moved to find creative ways -- using their interests and passions -- to raise money to help those affected by the conflict:

Pierogies for Peace

Dr. Daniel Chorney of Halifax, Nova Scotia, decided he wanted to help the country his grandparents came from. At first, he didn't know how to begin, having never fundraised before.

"I'm half Ukrainian, my grandparents came to Canada in 1948," Daniel explains. "I grew up with my grandma very closely, so it's very personal."

For him, growing up in the Ukrainian community, eating foods like pierogies (called "varenyky" in Ukraine) at celebrations was a common event.

"I knew that my grandmother and others at her church sold pierogies as a fundraiser while I was growing up," says Daniel. "Doing this, in the Ukraine community, is pretty common. What we're trying to do is make them, freeze them and sell them. Some people will cook them up and host a big dinner."

Daniel shares, "We're not in this business. My wife and I are psychologists, but we thought: 'we know how to make pierogies, our friends like them when I make them for my friends, so what if we just sold them frozen?'"

He recently held the Pierogies for Peace fundraising event at Good Robot Brewing Co. where he raised $12,210. After this success, Daniel now plans to fundraise more with future events, like teaching small groups how to make pierogies in lieu of donations.

Follow their efforts and photos – including those of his Ukrainian grandmother - on Instagram at @PierogiesforPeace.

Buttons for Ukraine

This compelling fundraiser started when 10-year-old Jake Tubaro, from Newmarket, Ontario, came home from school with a hand-drawn blue and yellow paper heart and a desire to help those fleeing Ukraine.

"This is Jake's brainchild," says his mom, Suzanne. "He was really struggling when this started and started asking a trillion questions. Then he saw the kids fleeing with parents with backpacks and that really bothered him – 'what would I put in my backpack', 'what if it happened here', 'what would we do with the animals'?

"He went to school, and at recess, he drew a paper heart with Ukraine colours on it. He asked, 'do you think anyone will buy these paper hearts?' I told him I didn't think anyone would buy them, but maybe if we put them on a button. So, an Amazon order later, we had 50 buttons.

"That night, he sat down and made nine out of 50. He asked me to post it on my Facebook, saying he wanted to get $500 for them," Suzanne recounts. "The next morning, I told him 'Those buttons are sold and you have 89 on order.'"

"By the time Jake came home from school that day, he had already met his $500 goal. His two brothers, Nathan and Owen, jumped in immediately. It became a family thing. Three days later, they had raised $1,500 and in just over a month, their "Buttons for Ukraine" goals quickly rose from $3,000 to $5,000, then to $10,000. And they met that goal on the first weekend in April, one month after Jake made those first nine buttons.

"I ask them often if they want to stop and they ask if the conflict is over -- as that's when they'll stop," Suzanne shares.

As of April 4, Jake had reached his goal of $10,000 with "Buttons for Ukraine."

He now has a new goal of $20,000 and is almost there with $17,860 raised as of July 2022. Follow ButtonsforUkraine on Twitter.

Run for Ukraine

In Alberta, junior high school teacher Daylan Wizniuk decided to take his love of running to a fundraising level when he was moved by what he was seeing on the news about Ukraine.

"Growing up, I was surrounded by a variety of different Ukrainian traditions," explains Daylan. "I felt a personal desire to try to do something that would hopefully be of benefit to the people of Ukraine and the efforts going on over there. Also, my wife and I welcomed our first child in December, so seeing families torn apart hit pretty close to home and was tough to watch."

He continues, "So, we decided to try to do something. I'm an ultra marathon runner - I race several times a year of varying distances. That seemed like the best way to maybe get attention and draw in more people to potentially donate to this fundraising effort. We brainstormed [with] four towns [around Alberta] that have significant Ukrainian sites still."

Ultra marathon is defined as anything longer than the usual 42.2 km marathon. Daylan has been competing at this level for the past six years, after previously competing in marathons.

On April 2, he ran approximately 170 kilometres through four cities – Mundare, Vegreville, St. Paul, and Glendon - ending on the morning of Sunday, April 3. He estimates the fundraising feat involved a total of 17 or 18 hours of running, with breaks between cities.

Daylan has raised more than $6,000. Follow Daylan's efforts at @WizniukRuns.

Ukrainian Tattoos Flash Sale

Coming from a Ukrainian family, tattoo artist Heather Mellor, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, knew she absolutely had to help out. Heather used her artwork by offering flash sales, where clients could purchase her created tattoos and donations would go to the Canadian Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.

"My great grandparents came over from Ukraine," she explains. "I thought, 'what

better incentive to get people to donate than to use my business as a tattoo artist to give people something to commemorate it and bring in good donations?'"

Drawing from her Ukrainian heritage, Heather created a total of 18 tattoo designs to offer to clients in this flash fundraising sale.

"Usually, I do custom work," she says, "but because I grew up with Ukrainian traditions, I was really inspired to come up with designs that took inspiration from the florals, the costumes they used to wear, embroidery and cross-stitching.

"I got over 250 inquiries about the flash pieces, and I ended up doing nine days of flash tattoos! I tattooed over 40 people in those nine days," Heather shares. "Usually, I don't see that many people in a whole month of work, but [during this fundraiser] I was tattooing 10-hour days, seeing about six clients a day -- it was hectic and busy but, overall, really worth it."

Her designs were so sought after that she also placed some prints for sale on her website to help address the demand.

"I couldn't tattoo all of the people who wanted tattoos, so I created three different prints, which was an opportunity for people who aren't in Winnipeg to participate," Heather notes. "I made approximately $5,000 in print sales."

All combined, she was able to make an incredible donation of $19,000 to the Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal thanks to this fundraising.

Her creative prints are still for sale, with donations going to the Canadian Red Cross, and can be found on her Instagram profile at @HeatherMellor.

We Love Ukraine Fundraiser

Linda Aldridge has been a volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross for just over a year. She says because of the 2016 Fort McMurray fires -- and that she has time to volunteer now that her kids are older -- she volunteered in emergency response, helping in the B.C. floods last fall.

"I've been a volunteer since February 2021, now that I have time," explains Linda, pictured right with her friend, Ganna Melekh, at the New York City Marathon. "One of the ladies I run with in my running club, Ganna, is from

Kyiv, Ukraine and her mother and brother fled to the mountains from the city. She's my friend and she's telling me this – I felt like saying 'sorry' wasn't enough for her when I have a relationship with the Red Cross."

Linda approached her running club to see how she could raise donations for the Canadian Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal.

"I decided to have an event at the Legion. I basically held a fundraising party: hired a band, rented a room, invited everybody I knew to come. A lot of people stepped forward with silent auction items. It was quite emotionally overwhelming how people want to do something."

Linda held her event on March 12 and raised almost $16,000 by bringing together her running club, her volunteerism and even her mail carrier, who was the singer of the band, to make a memorable evening.

"The response was amazing," she adds. "A couple incredible things happened – a person approached me to match the bid of an $3,000 value item in the silent auction, and one of my friends took an empty plastic jug around the room and told everyone to empty their wallets. They did so, and we had this massive cash collection. People just want to do something tangible."

Her Ukrainian friend was so touched by her efforts that she gifted Linda a necklace in gratitude.

"She gave me the most beautiful, beaded necklace that evening and told me I'm Ukrainian now. It was incredible. It was very emotional."

Round of applause

The Canadian Red Cross is grateful to these fundraisers, and every fundraiser across Canada, for taking the initiative to help support those affected by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and surrounding countries. We give a thankful round of applause for your care, concern, energy and efforts to help.

Submitted by Kathryn Dunmore, Canadian Red Cross, Community Manager. This article was originally published on the Canadian Red Cross blog. You can find it and many other articles at www.redcross.ca/blog