

The Story behind the North Salem Committee for Ukraine

Sometimes, events come together so smoothly that it seems like they're meant to be. And so it is with the North Salem Committee for Ukraine fundraiser.

Local resident Rebecca Baldrige spent almost nine years living and working in Russia and Ukraine as an emerging markets investment professional. She has many dear friends in both countries. While her Russian friends may be unanimously horrified at Putin's criminal atrocities, some of her closest Ukrainian friends are now on the front lines, fighting to keep Ukraine free. For Rebecca, this war is personal.

From the outset, she was determined to do anything possible to help. Together with one of her Ukrainian friends, Rebecca started a drive to obtain medical supplies for a Ukrainian Army unit fighting outside Kyiv. She enlisted two other close friends to help -- David Lavie, who grew up in Odessa, and Eric Feldt, whose grandmother hails from the same city. Their first shipment of supplies arrived in Kyiv this week -- 171 desperately needed tourniquets along with a broad assortment of other medical supplies.

At the same time, Rebecca was in touch with another old friend -- Dan Rapaport, a Russian-American investment banker who was her boss in the old Moscow days -- and who has lived in Kyiv for the past six years, running a capital introduction firm for private equity investors.

Until February 24th, Dan, a classic example of the smartly suited Wall Street investment banker, lived a quiet life with his Ukrainian wife and 2-year-old daughter. Today, after evacuating his family to Poland, he patrols the streets of Kyiv in a Kevlar vest and helmet. As an American citizen, Dan is under no obligation to remain in harm's way. Nonetheless, he's committed to Ukraine's fight. Not only does he patrol, but he works directly with the Ukrainian government to raise funds, leveraging his extensive international network, and provides any other type of assistance necessary. His home is the first stop for retired American soldiers who are joining the fight. He works directly with army units to get them the equipment they need.

Rebecca's stories of her direct contacts in Ukraine and her deep personal connection to the country captured the interest of her North Salem friends. She joined forces with Chris Evers, who's already been actively working to aid Ukraine. Rebecca and Chris, along with Linda van Kooy, Julia Burke, Libby Parker, Karen Aronian, Patti Hupp, Catherine Hormats, and Alexandra Kohl, created the North Salem Committee for Ukraine to help raise funds to support the Ukrainian people.

Of course, no fundraising effort can be successful without the participation of a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Dan came to the rescue. He sits on the board of the Tsal Kaplun foundation, an organization formed to memorialize Nazi atrocities in Ukraine in WW2. Today, the organization has shifted its focus to address the country's humanitarian crisis. Specifically, the foundation has focused on supporting the town of Iziaslav, in Western Ukraine. Since the onset of the war, the town has been inundated with refugees, all of whom are in desperate need of shelter, food, clothing, and financial assistance. Foundation head Dr. Joseph Meneker has been working closely with the Iziaslav administration to support the refugees.

The North Salem Committee for Ukraine has allied with the Tsal Kaplun Foundation to raise money for the refugees of Iziaslav as well as the fighters whom Rebecca knows personally. A donation to any organization is laudable. But donating through the North Salem Committee for Ukraine offers a personal connection, and the satisfaction of seeing the faces of the people you help. We know this is money towards boots on the ground.

As the war grinds on, the danger is that the constant barrage of news may inure people to the ongoing suffering. Ordinary people around the world have shown overwhelming support for Ukraine and it's critical that we sustain this momentum. We believe that here, in our beautiful and peaceful town, this personal connection will help us all remain engaged and committed to helping the people of Ukraine.

Even the smallest donation can help.