

# HALTON RALLYING TO AID UKRAINIAN FAMILIES

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resident Galina Grinchenko) that she considers many Ukrainian community members to be "old friends."

"Everybody's helping," she said, describing the outpouring of support for those fleeing the war zones. This includes accommodation, donations of summer clothing and stroller, and even a laptop for her young daughter.

As the war in Ukraine rages on, millions of families have been displaced from their homes, with more than five million people seeking refuge in other countries, according to the United Nations.

Father Michael Loza from St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church called the military invasion and indiscriminate cruelty

against ordinary citizens a "shock" to the majority of the world. But in a sense, he said it brings people together.

"The community has rallied together," he said. "Every community in Canada is a mixture of many different cultures. And there's been something of a unifying factor in coming together in times of difficulty — and chaos and war."

The pastor said that the church has been organizing medical supply drives, as well as social events to assist newly arrived Ukrainians settling in their new home. There's a psychologist with a Ukrainian background that comes to the weekly meeting to support newcomers dealing with personal tragedies.

Community members across the region have also



Graham Paine/Metroland

Father Michael Loza holds some of the artwork from students across Halton showing their support for the people of Ukraine. His church has been helping to welcome Ukrainian families who've fled the war.

been stepping up — from art exhibits in Halton Hills for Ukrainian relief efforts to a young humanitarian

collecting sleeping bags in Milton and Burlington.

Halton Region recently allocated \$1 million for a

transitional housing program that would provide about 50 Ukrainian households with supportive housing for up to 12 months. The initiative will be administered by the Halton Multicultural Council.

Recounting her paths to safety, Jane said it was fortunate they got out of the besieged city in time, a mere day before the Mariupol theatre, where many locals had sought shelter from shelling, was bombed.

But leaving everything behind, including friends and family members, was bittersweet.

With her eyes set on the future, Jane said her main focus is her daughter, Kira, and son, Andrew Jr.

A budding gymnast, Kira was part of the national gymnastics team and even set to compete abroad, the mom said. Jane is hopeful

that there's a local sports or gymnastics club that would let her daughter continue her dream. Meanwhile, their son is recovering from encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain tissues, which requires treatment from a specialist.

As for Andrew, who is more fluent in English, he said he's working to get his driver's licence and other qualifications.

Despite the challenges, Andrew and Jane are glad to have a roof over their heads and appreciate the kindness of the community — especially how the world hasn't forgotten about Ukrainians.

"The people here ... they do care about Ukrainian people," Jane said.

**STORY BEHIND THE STORY:** We wanted to share the journey of a Ukrainian family who seeks refuge in Halton and how the region is supporting those who fled the war.

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