

# 'IT REALLY RESTORED MY FAITH'

## GEORGETOWN MAN ASSISTS IN UKRAINIAN RELIEF EFFORT

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Karol Chlebek couldn't help but feel nervous as their van approached the Ukrainian border.

For weeks, he had seen images from the war on the news, and now as he prepared to enter the country, he didn't know what they would encounter.

"It doesn't really hit you until you're so close to the Ukraine," said the 23-year-old Georgetown resident. "Watching the news, you see everything is destroyed, so we really didn't know what to expect."

Chlebek had spent the previous week packing food kits in the warehouse of a Romanian potato factory.

After seeing what the Ukrainian people were going through, Chlebek had thought, "donations are

great, but I wondered if I could do anything else."

For three months, he was on a waiting list for a humanitarian deployment through the Global Medic Rapid Response Team. When he finally got the call, he was told there was a group leaving in four days. A primary care paramedic for Peel Region, Chlebek quickly checked to see if he could get the time off for the three-week trip.

Now, waiting at the border, he was about to see the impacts of the war firsthand. While Chlebek didn't see rubble of bombed buildings — most of the fighting was taking place several hundred kilometres to the west — he did see thousands of people from those areas who were forced to flee from their homes. Pharmacies, schools, gymnasiums and hospitals had been converted into shelters.

Chlebek and his group delivered supplies to cities and towns in Chernivtsi province, across the Romanian border.

"We would be talking to

someone (through a translator) and later we'd ask, 'Who was that?' And they'd say, 'Oh, that was the mayor' or 'That was the general of the local military branch.' They were so appreciative."

He said they were shocked to find out he had come from Canada to help them.

Chlebek's group made four trips into Ukraine, crossing the border at 7 a.m. and not returning until 9 p.m. On those trips, they managed to deliver 1,500 emergency food kits. They were supposed to make two more trips, but another humanitarian group had heard missile sirens. The missiles were shot down 100 kilometres from where they were, but it was still deemed too dangerous to return for the final trips.

"You feel for what they are going through," he said. "You see all the wreckage on TV and then you meet the people who lived there. Those were their homes. It gives you a different perspective."

Chlebek said the relief



Karol Chlebek photo  
Karol Chlebek's Global Medic Rapid Response Team delivered 1,500 boxes of food and supplies during four trips to Ukraine.

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**- Karol Chlebek**

effort was very well organized and so many people contributed, from the factory owner who let them use his warehouse for free (and

occasionally treated them to fries), to the Romanian churches who helped them in purchasing food and supplies, to their taxi driver/

translator who helped them navigate a foreign city.

But what impressed Chlebek the most were the Ukrainian people.

"It shows you how optimistic people can be. The children were amazing. We talked to the kitchen staff and they were all teachers who were volunteering. The locals stepped up to help, stocking shelves, cooking," he said. "It really restored my faith that times like that really brings people together."

## WHAT SCHOOL BOARD DO YOU SUPPORT?

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Do you know which board your money is going towards?

The Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) is inviting members of the community to check or — possibly — change their direction of school support in

time for the upcoming municipal and school board elections set for October.

By default, property taxes support the English Public Board in a municipality.

However, that can be changed. Only residents who provide tax support to a particular board are able to vote in that board's trustee elections. The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is responsible for collecting the information of residents in Onta-

rio to create a list of eligible voters for school board elections and to direct funds.

Eligible residents can visit [www.voterlookup.ca](http://www.voterlookup.ca) to confirm that they are on the list to vote in the school board elections, and to determine which school board elections they are eligible to

vote in. To change the direction of support, residents need to fill out and submit a Application for Direction of School Support form, which can be found on the HCDSB's website.

The 2022 Municipal and School Board elections are set for Oct. 24.

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