

# NEIGHBORHOOD

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EXTRA

## South Rotarians support Ukrainian refugees in Poland

**NICKI KLEIN, LINCOLN SOUTH ROTARY,**  
for the Neighborhood Extra

Vi See and Jenny Cardwell are longtime friends who spent their careers in the nonprofit arena. They wanted to help Ukrainian refugees and started donating to Operation Safe Harbor Ukraine (OSHU).

Keeping up with the activities of OSHU, they learned more about the needs and struggles of the people of Ukraine and wondered if they could do more. They learned what was being done through Rotary and by Rotarians and found the answer – they would volunteer.

See and Cardwell volunteered at the Best Western Hotel Felix in Warsaw, Poland through OSHU to support 155 Ukrainian refugees staying at the hotel.

Their volunteer duties were primarily to staff the supply room and provide medications to women and children. The Ukrainians were experiencing a high level of stress and anxiety, which led to headaches, stomachaches, and cold and flu symptoms. In addition, they were responsible for shopping for medicines and

supplies to make healthy snacks each day.

The supply room was also filled with donated clothing, toys and books, as well as personal care items such as diapers, wipes, dental care items and detergent.

Thanks to the support of Lincoln South Rotary Club members, family and friends, See and Cardwell brought throat lozenges, children's books written in English and Russian, Hot Wheels cars, baby dolls, personal notes with bracelets and nail polish and supplies for women and teens, crayons and coloring books, and much more.

They used cash donations to purchase supplies as well as additional toys and games. There was a heat wave while they were in Warsaw, so some cash was used to purchase shorts, tops and sundresses.

When things were quiet in the supply room, See and Cardwell would play with the children and talk with the mothers with help from Google translate. They also shared meals with children and their families. They enjoyed meeting volunteers from Lincoln



COURTESY PHOTO

Jenny Cardwell (left) and Vi See (center) volunteered through Operation Safe Harbor Ukraine to provide support and relief to refugees staying in Warsaw, Poland. They enjoyed sharing meals with new friends.

and throughout the world.

"Although a common language is not shared, so much can be learned and felt during a shared game of Jenga or a shared meal," noted See. "Friendships are bound over smiles and tears."

While in Warsaw, See and Cardwell met via Zoom with the Warsaw Wilanow Rotary Club. That Club has supported Operation

Safe Harbor Ukraine and provided meals through the World Central Kitchen.

"This was the experience of a lifetime, and I am so glad that I was able to go with Vi and meet such incredible, courageous women and men and their children," said Cardwell. "Even though language was difficult, a hug is universal! My hope is that this unprovoked

war ends soon, and the Ukrainian government and people can rebuild their beautiful country and live in peace."

It is hard to fully measure the impact of the kindness and generosity of Rotarians such as See and Cardwell and the OSHU organization. Though there is stress and anxiety among the refugees, for a while, tears are replaced by smiles, snacks help fill a hungry stomach and personal needs are met.

There are Rotary Clubs in Ukraine, but due to current circumstances, they need the help of Rotary around the world. Lincoln South Rotary Club thanks See and Cardwell for sharing their time and treasures to provide some support.

For information about Lincoln South Rotary Club, connect through [www.lincolnsouthrotary.org](http://www.lincolnsouthrotary.org). From [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org), "No challenge is too big for Rotary. For more than 110 years, we've bridged cultures and connected continents to champion peace, fight illiteracy and poverty, promote clean water and sanitation, and fight disease."