

# Jewish Federation of Madison: Leaders return from mission to Ukraine/Poland Border

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Leaders from the Jewish Federation of Madison (JFM) returned home on April 5 after a whirlwind visit to the Ukraine/Poland border and four refugee centers in and around Warsaw. JFM Executive Director Alan Klugman and President Joe Shumow spent 48 hours on the ground in Poland as part of a delegation of two dozen leaders from the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) to be briefed and witness the refugee crisis firsthand. They heard heart-wrenching and inspiring personal stories from refugee families and individuals and about the lifesaving work our partners on the ground are doing. Additionally, Alan and Joe brought six suitcases filled with much-needed over-the-counter medications for distribution to refugees, donated by members of the Madison community.

In just over the one month since the fighting began, the Jewish Federation of Madison's Ukraine Emergency Relief Fund has raised over \$100,000 from the Madison community, part of \$43.4 million collectively raised by Jewish Federations, 100% going to relief efforts. Some \$40 million of this has already been allocated to 35 NGOs operating on the ground in Ukraine and neighboring countries to support Ukrainian refugees in their time of need – both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Per Executive Director Alan Klugman, "We stood at the border crossing at Medyka, Poland, and the very first booths inside the Polish border to welcome Ukrainians are run by our partner organizations, The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). They don't ask anyone about their faith or their culture; they just offer aid to all who are in need."

Once inside Poland, refugees need housing, food, clothing, medications, healthcare, mental health services, and transportation. A broad network of NGOs and the Polish government are working tirelessly to provide those services. Organizations funded by JFNA and JFM are on the ground helping in Poland. "From daycare provided by

Dror Israel at the Warsaw Expo Center to JAFI and JDC renting hotels for Ukrainians, our partner organizations are as ubiquitous at refugee centers as they are talented. I'm so proud of their work – truly doing *Tikkun Olam*, the Jewish principle of repairing the world,” said President Joe Shumow.

Our partner organizations providing relief on the ground were ready to jump into action because Jewish Federations have helped build and sustain them over decades through regular giving during quieter times. “The skill and expertise we have been witnessing in the relief efforts in Ukraine and in the bordering countries is the result of years of experience, training, relationship building, and fundraising,” said Jewish Federations of North America President and CEO Eric Fingerhut.