

# ONE-OF-A-KIND NON PROFIT FORMED IN REACTION TO THE SOVIET INVASION OF UKRAINE

*In a twist on how charities are responding to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, a new charity focuses on the volunteers who are assisting the millions of refugees.*

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- Many nonprofits are started these days for a host of very admirable and worthwhile reasons but they often have overlapping missions with other organizations that are already established. Not until now has there been a charity organized that is truly unique. Where many organizations have been formed recently to specifically help the refugees of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, The [Volunteer Housing Initiative](#) was formed to specifically help the volunteers and relief workers who assist the refugees.

"I went to Poland last March - at the

beginning of the Russian Invasion into Ukraine - to help with the Ukrainian refugee crisis", said James Purtell, Founder and Executive Director of [VHI](#), "I volunteered at a refugee center and my eyes were opened to many things. One thing that surprised me more than anything else was the large number of volunteers that were sleeping out of their cars, or in tents - in very frigid temperatures I might add - some even slept in closets within the refugee center itself. I knew immediately that I had to do something about that." The Volunteer Housing Initiative provides housing for volunteers and relief workers responding to the Ukrainian refugee crisis and hopes to expand to provide housing for volunteer and relief workers responding to other humanitarian crises - both domestic and foreign. Mr Purtell added, "I observed that because they weren't getting the proper rest, the volunteers were operating at less than 100% - and the Ukrainian refugees deserved better than that. Support deserves support"



Volunteers outside a refugee center in Przemysl, Poland

Fast forward three months later and The Volunteer Housing Initiative opened its first house for volunteers in Przemyśl, Poland just 15 miles from the Ukrainian border crossing town of Medyka and also the location of the refugee center where Mr. Purtell volunteered. He has travelled twice now to Poland to help with the refugee crisis. When he got back from Poland the first time, he immediately called on resources to put the non profit in place. He formed a board of directors which includes one of the volunteers he met in Przemyśl, Hessel van Leeuwen from the Netherlands. "I met Hessel during my first night shift at the refugee center - commonly referred to as TESCO. In casual conversation he told me how he had arranged a ride from the Netherlands to Poland and had been dropped off at TESCO and hadn't thought about anything beyond that. Having a spare couch at the apartment where I stayed, I offered it up to him." Prior to leaving Poland and with personal funds, Mr. Purtell arranged for an airbnb for not only Hessel but three others.. When he returned to Poland the second time, Mr. Purtell and Mr. van Leeuwen set out to find a property for the volunteers near the refugee center. "We found the perfect property that houses 10 volunteers and provides them with not only a place to sleep but a place to relax and unwind. Volunteering at the center can be both mentally and physically exhausting." With the help of The Volunteer Housing Initiative's donors, the house in Przemyśl is funded 100% by the organization. As VHI continues its fundraising activities, it hopes to open more houses over the coming months. "The fundraising has been going very well and we hope to announce our 2nd house very shortly", said Mr. Purtell.

The Volunteer Housing Initiative's goal is to expand beyond Przemyśl, Poland and provide housing for volunteers in other parts of Poland as well as Romania. The long range goal and mission is to provide adequate housing for volunteers responding to humanitarian crises throughout the entire world. "Wouldn't it be incredible if more people volunteered simply because they knew that VHI was there as a resource to provide the most basic of necessities - shelter? This could be a game changer for volunteering going forward".

The Volunteer Housing Initiative is a 501(C)(3) Charitable Organization. Contributions to The Volunteer Housing Initiative are tax deductible in accordance with Tax Code section 170.

James Purtell

The Volunteer Housing Initiative

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