



Dear Friends of the GAI,

Some of you may know that my husband and I own a home in Zell, Germany, a town of about 5,000 people on the Moselle river between Koblenz and Trier in Rheinland-Palatinate (or “die Pfalz”). Zell is full of friendly people, hundreds of kilometers of biking and hiking trails, and delicious wine. We found ourselves here in March 2022, just a few days after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Soon, Ukrainians fleeing the war began to arrive. There are now more than 300 refugees in Zell and nearby villages, with more arriving daily.

We were moved by the swift and organized effort Zell has taken to support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees through donations of money and goods by residents and businesses in the area. These efforts are led by the mayor, Hans-Peter Döpgen, in collaboration with many other local leaders.

Zell also has direct connections to Poland, the front line of Ukrainian refugee efforts in Europe. For some time Zell has been coordinating with Plonsk, Poland, to become official sister cities (“partner cities” in Germany), and now this relationship has been accelerated by the Ukraine crisis. Plonsk is also partnered with the Ukrainian city Ternopil, just outside Lviv.

Here are just a few examples of the work that is being done:

- A semi-truck of essential goods was loaded and delivered to Ternopil, including critical medical supplies donated by the local hospital
- Plonsk has used monetary donations from the residents of Zell to provide immediate support for refugees arriving in the city
- Zell residents and organizations are creating warm, safe and welcoming spaces for refugees to settle

Sharing these stories, we found that many of our friends and loved ones in Minnesota wanted to donate to support Ukrainians where they knew that their donation would go so swiftly and directly to refugees and provide the support they need.

Last Monday we met with the mayor of Zell, Hans-Peter Döpgen. He would welcome any additional monetary donations to support Ukrainians— whether they are already here in Zell or in Plonsk.

The GAI has set a goal to raise \$20,000 to support these efforts. To read more about the work that is being done, including letters from the mayors of both Zell and Plonsk, or to donate, you can visit gaimn.org/ukraine.

There are many other wonderful organizations supporting displaced Ukrainian refugees. This one spoke to us because we saw close up how a small German community is instinctively and selflessly making direct efforts to help Ukrainians—and how everyone from the mayor to business owners to the fire department are contributing their time, equipment, facilities, and donations. If you would like to donate, please go to gaimn.org/ukraine or call the office at 651.222.7027. 100% of our donations will go directly to supporting Ukrainian refugees in or around Zell and Plonsk.

GAI community, we thank you in advance for your attention and for any support you are able to provide.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Danika Hoffmann'.

Danika Hoffmann, GAI Board Chair