

Dear Friends of Refugee Ministries,

We are prayerfully seeking a sponsor for a very special refugee from Ukraine. This individual is currently in a sponsorship conversation with a US host in our network; however, given the urgency of his impending visa expiration, we are seeking possibilities for a plan “B”.

Kostya is 21 years old. Before the war broke out, he had received a year-long volunteer appointment in Turin, Italy through one of our Volunteer Ministries partners, the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, Kostya was stuck in Italy and his Italian supervisors called out to the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network for a secondary volunteer placement for Kostya.

When we first heard about Kostya’s situation from the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network, we were simply looking for a volunteer position for a young adult volunteer from Ukraine. The war was new and wrongly anticipated to be short-lived. We now know that Kostya is clearly a refugee, and eligible for a special refugee status visa. But we also want to place him somewhere where he can fulfil his desire to serve.

We are immediately and urgently seeking a sponsor for this young man, so he can fulfil his dream of serving and learning English.

Please know that our urgency is not for dramatic effect – we have a very tight timeline to get a visa out of Italy and into the USA. This is a reality of bringing refugees to safety in the USA.

To bring a Ukrainian to safety in the USA under the [Uniting for Ukraine | USCIS](#) Campaign, the Ukrainian needs a fiscal sponsor. **Kostya needs an American sponsor to send an I-134 to the federal government stating that they will be financially liable for him for the two years he is in the United States.**

About Kostya’s personal situation:

- Kostya is currently in Turin, Italy where he is serving as a long-term, full-time volunteer with the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network, of which the National Offices of the United Church of Christ are a member denomination in the USA. He has been working in a senior home, receiving very good evaluations as a volunteer.
- Kostya is an orphan, and the war in Ukraine means he does not have a home or independent living situation to which he can return. He has two living older

brothers, one in Germany and one in Odessa. We do not want to manipulate you or pull your heartstrings here, but the alternatives for Kostya in Ukraine are concerning.

- Kostya has some training as a mechanic and has a Protestant Sunday School background. He understands that our churches are more down to earth than what is shown in the US media and are sometimes open and affirming; he generally showed a humble and friendly personality. He is interested in learning English and writes well enough in English to have completed a Partners in Service application for Volunteer Ministries.

About sponsoring a special “Humanitarian Parole” Ukrainian Refugee visa:

- In respect of the current state of war, the USA has made Ukrainians eligible for something called Humanitarian Parole. That means Kostya applies for an emergency visa to come to the United States for up to two years while he finds some footing/awaits things in Ukraine to even out.
- An I-134 is a liability catchall for the government. *It does not mean you would be paying his bills.* Kostya has a demonstrated history of responsibly caring for himself while under a volunteering contract, so he’s unlikely to be a liability to a host. He will qualify for a work visa and can work in the US if he wants to and can volunteer as much as he likes!
- In the unlikely case of an emergency that required special support from the sponsor, we in the UCC National Offices would help coordinate support to stabilize the situation.
- Link to I-134 information: [Declaration of Financial Support | USCIS](#)

What else can a sponsor do? This is not a requirement, but an ideal scenario for Kostya includes:

- A caring community...to be his friends and “American family.”
- A place to serve...where he can volunteer and have a supervisor that is supporting his personal development in coordination with UCC National. It would be like any other volunteer placement, except that he’s on this I-134 sponsorship visa. He can also just work at any job if that’s the preferred arrangement between him and a host.
- A place to live. Like a cabin on a farm or a camp or even a room in a home, like an exchange student. Or a dorm.

- Kostya is also open to moving around and visiting multiple hosts sites. There can, however, only be one I-134 sponsor, which is the most urgent piece of this puzzle.

There is financial investment from the National Offices. If Kostya formally enters a volunteering engagement with your church or UCC non-profit, he will be eligible for the benefits and resources of our Partner in Service program. For example, the UCC can pay for his health insurance.

Your OCWM dollars are graciously supporting the staff time and ecumenical networks that are facilitating this process – thank you for your generosity in the past that makes ministry possible in the present!

Please prayerfully consider this ministry and contact us immediately if you are able and interested. Feel free to contact us with any further questions or to review his “Partners in Service” Application, as it is Kostya’s intention to serve in any location where he is matched.

Peace and blessings,

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In the wake of devastating conditions, the United Church of Christ, through Wider Church Ministries, is present supporting life and rebuilding lives with resources made available through the [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) (OGHS) Offering.