



## MVUC Refugee Response Fundraiser

**What is the Purpose of this Fundraiser?** The Refugee Response Committee is currently focused on raising funds to help a refugee family in Alexandria. They are Liza and her two young daughters, Zlata (7) and Yeva (5), who fled the war in Ukraine through the Uniting for Ukraine Program. They are being sponsored by Chelsea and Greg Huebner, the daughter and son-in-law of long-time MVUC members Brian and Helen Lounsbury.

**What is the Refugee Response Committee (RRC) and how are they involved?** The RRC is a newly-formed committee under Social Justice Committee. The charter states that the purpose of this committee is “*to respond to refugee emergency situations in a timely manner, providing volunteers, in-kind donations, and financial assistance to refugees.*” We have an opportunity to do just that. Of note, should we collect more funds than are needed for this effort, the RRC will ensure all donations are used in support of work authorized by our charter.

**How did it come about that Liza and her daughters came to the US?** When Russia invaded Ukraine, Liza and her two girls were forced to flee after their town, ironically also named Alexandria, was bombed. She left behind her husband, Serhii, their dog, Rocky, all of their belongings, and other family members. Serhii has a medical issue so he has not been conscripted into the Ukrainian Army. However, he is helping his local community to resist the invading Russians. After evacuating, Liza and her girls ended up in a hotel in Cyprus for two months. A potential host family in Montana ultimately decided that they were unable to sponsor them. In desperation, Liza reached out to Greg whom she had met in the Peace Corps in 2009. Greg and Chelsea had not planned on sponsoring a refugee family, but in an amazing act of humanity and generosity, they agreed to host the family for up to two years as their sponsors.

**Tell me more about Greg and Chelsea Huebner?** Greg and Chelsea have two girls (ages one and four) and they live in the Hollin Hall Village neighborhood. Greg is a Fairfax County School child psychologist and Chelsea works for the World Wildlife Fund. They live in a modest home that is definitely not meant to house seven people for two years.

**What is the role of a sponsor?** In addition to providing an amazing amount of emotional and logistical support for Liza and her daughters, as their sponsors, Greg and Chelsea have taken on the full responsibility for supporting all of the financial needs of their new family, including lodging, food, clothing, transportation, medical support, etc.

**What is MVUC’s role?** MVUC is a supporter and we are in no way legally responsible for Liza and her daughters.

**Will Liza be able to work?** Liza, who speaks English well, has submitted a work authorization request to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services but it could be up to a year before she is granted approval to work.

**Has Liza been able to qualify for any financial support from the U.S. Government?** Yes, Liza applied for assistance through the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement. Through this program, Liza has been granted Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for two programs totaling \$1,000 a month (but only for 12 months).

**About how much does it cost for a family to stay in the US for two years?** Greg and Chelsea have created an estimated budget. This budget is fairly conservative and focuses on priorities and does not include such things as a car which would certainly be “nice to have.” Their budget estimates that it will cost about \$75,000 for two years. This budget is in keeping with the estimate by most refugee organizations that the cost for a refugee family in a high-cost-of-living area such as ours is about \$20,000 for six months or \$80,000 for two years.

**How can MVUC help?** The Refugee Response Committee reached out to Greg and Chelsea to see how MVUC might help. They said that it would be most helpful if MVUC members and friends could help raise money to pay the rent for an apartment or a small house.

**About how much does it cost to rent an apartment?** Looking at what is available in the area, it is estimated that renting a small apartment or small house would cost about \$2,000 a month. The total rental cost for the duration of their stay, assuming an apartment can be found in October, would be about \$40,000. Although enabling Liza and her daughters to move into an apartment on their own is the ultimate goal, Chelsea and Greg don’t want to have Liza and her girls move into an apartment until they are comfortable that they will be able to afford to stay there until May 2024.

**Are MVUC members and friends expected to raise the full amount?** No, the hope is that this effort will be a partnership between MVUC and other outside organizations. We have already reached out to the local Rotary and they are excited to help. There is also a fundraising platform for UUs, called Faithify, and the RRC will be running a fundraiser on this platform as well. In addition, friends, neighbors, and relatives are also encouraged to participate.

**How long will the fundraiser last?** The fundraiser kicked off on August 28<sup>th</sup> and will run through the end of September.

**What if I missed the Fundraiser can I still see it?** Yes, please check out this 10-minute YouTube video where you will meet some amazing adults and some really cute kids. [Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, Ukrainian Refugee Fundraiser Kickoff, August 28, 2022 - YouTube](#)

**How do I donate?** Donations may be made in the following ways:

- By e-check or credit card using the online giving/automatic payment form reached through Realm or the MVUC Website– please select “Refugee Response Fund”
- By check – either mailed, put in the collection basket, or put in the door slot of the administrative office. Please put RRF or Refugee Response Fund in the memo line.
- By check, cash, or credit card on Sundays at the RRC table through the end of September

**Rather than give a lump sum donation may I spread out my donation over time?** Yes, if it is easier for you to commit to an amount and then give it incrementally, such as monthly, that is fine.

**What if I want to donate a portion of my IRA Required Minimum Distribution to support this effort?** This is called a qualified charitable distribution or QCD and it is an excellent idea for anyone 70 ½ or older. At your request, a check is sent directly from your IRA to MVUC. This allows you to exclude the amount of your contribution from taxable income. Please list the charitable organization's name as Mount Vernon Unitarian Church. Please put Refugee Response Fund in the memo or directions line. MVUC's Tax ID number is 54-0625581. In addition, it would be helpful if you could please fill out [this form](#) available on the MVUC website to alert the staff that a donation is coming. If you have any questions, please send an e-mail to [birgit.robbert@comcast.net](mailto:birgit.robbert@comcast.net) and she will happily help you.

**What if I want to transfer stock or money from a mutual fund?** This is also an excellent option. If you are doing this it would be helpful if you would please fill out [this form](#) on the MVUC website. This will alert the staff that there is a donation coming. If you have any questions, please send an e-mail to [birgit.robbert@comcast.net](mailto:birgit.robbert@comcast.net) and she will happily help you.

**What if I have friends, relatives, or neighbors who would like to donate?** That would be great. They can mail a check to MVUC (1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria, VA 22307) or give a check to you to deliver. If they would prefer to pay by credit or debit card, please ask them to go to [Faithify.org](https://Faithify.org). The MVUC campaign should come up on top. If not, please type MVUC in the search box, then click on the campaign, then click to contribute, and fill in the required information.

**Is this donation tax deductible?** Yes, donations are fully tax deductible.

**Will the RRC be providing anything other than financial assistance?** Yes, the RRC will also assist in coordinating the donation of other items and services to help Liza and her daughters get through these unimaginably challenging times. Two MVUC members are already helping the girls learn English.

**What do the sunflower stickers on our name tags mean:** Anyone who has donated to the RRC fundraiser will get a sticker on their nametag. This helps us know whom to thank and whom to ask about contributing.

**What if I have more questions?** If you have specific questions that you would like answered, please send an e-mail to [RRC@mvuc.org](mailto:RRC@mvuc.org) or stop by the RRC table on Sundays after Church through Sept 25<sup>th</sup>.

**We are very excited to help Liza and her daughters during this unimaginably difficult time and hope you will be, too!**

Thank you for your support!  
The Refugee Response Committee:  
Joan Darrah, Chair, Martha Dyckes, Laura Greer, Lynne Kennedy, and Tony Morris