

Local News

Woman living in Redmond returning to Ukraine

Ira Steeves, a refugee from war-torn nation, going back to Ukraine as a volunteer with her husband

BY JOE SISS
CO Media Group

A Redmond man and his new Ukrainian wife, who came to Central Oregon as a refugee from Russia's invasion and war with Ukraine, will return to the war-torn country to assist as volunteers on a team moving food and supplies into formerly Russian occupied territory.

Ira Steeves, along with her sister, Kristina Sinohach, fled Ukraine with Connor Steeves, 23, in the spring. The group first left Ukraine by crossing into Poland, then flying to South America, and then to Mexico before crossing into the U.S. via the southern border in July. The sisters and Steeves settled in Redmond, where Steeves' parents live, and on July 25, Ira and Connor Steeves got married.

Ira and Connor Steeves met in Ukraine while they were volunteering for the We're Near team, a humanitarian organization that assists refugees, and soon after began dating. They both have travel arrangements to arrive back in Ukraine on Jan. 2 where they plan to teach English to Ukrainians fleeing the war, and to volunteer with a nonprofit missionary organization.

In the beginning of the trip, the couple will first visit Ira's family in her home town of Chernivtsi, something Ira Steeves said she looks forward to without fear.

"I am not scared. I know there we will always have help and support that we will need, because there are still lots of my family and friends," she said. "I was more nervous in the beginning, when I was just thinking about it, but now I am feeling peace about it."

Now, the two are settled on their plans to enter Ukraine via the Romanian border, where Ira Steeves' parent's will pick them up. Once settled in the country, the couple will volunteer through the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, where they will plan and raise money to start an English language and leadership training program for students living in villages within the Kyiv region, Connor Steeves said.

As part of the initiative, the couple will also offer their own English lan-



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Connor and Ira Steeves of Redmond stand before a Ukrainian flag. The couple is traveling to Ukraine to help a nonprofit organization that works with youths.

guage classes independent from the university, Steeves said.

The couple also plans to lend a hand working with a team of missionaries in the country under the auspices of the Youth with a Mission organization, a nonprofit interdenominational Christian training program that operates around the globe.

The couple will be working with James Hopkins, a missionary who runs the Youth With a Mission organization in Lutsk, and who has lived in Ukraine for 25 years. Hopkins, along with his wife, organizes aid programs for Ukrainians fleeing the war, offering food, clothing, shelter, and supplies.

Hopkins said he and his wife and two daughters, who decided to stay in Ukraine, were expecting Russian President Vladimir Putin to invade the country.

They were prepared, and had

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— Ira Steeves, Ukrainian refugee now living in Redmond

bought supplies and a generator, Hopkins said.

Hopkins said soon after the Russians invaded the country, people would come to his door with Molotov cocktails and plans to teach him and his family how to properly throw them at tanks, an experience he described as "surreal"

At the moment, Hopkins' crew is primarily delivering food to the eastern side of the country, in addition to some other supplies and medical gear, he said. Hopkins said the organization

ment.

While Hopkins and his crew do not teach English, he agreed that the skill is essential.

Hopkins added that the couple would be working with him as volunteers, and would most likely be based in Lutsk, the city in northwest Ukraine where Hopkins lives with his family, and where the organization he directs is stationed. With a team of between three and 12 volunteers, Hopkins said, the group would move into formerly Russian occupied areas, and other devastated regions, to deliver food and supplies, in addition to sharing information about Christianity, which Hopkins said gives many Ukrainians affected by the war hope.

Ira and Connor Steeves have a GoFundMe page to raise money to assist in Ukraine.

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Wintervention series comes to Redmond

BY NICK ROSENBERGER
Redmond Spokesman

Hoodoo's Wintervention event series kicked off on Nov. 15 in Sisters before heading to General Duffy's Annex in Redmond on Nov. 22 — where a crowd gathered shoulder to shoulder for contests, trivia and prize giveaways.

"It's amazing," said Lauren Wenzel, a bar manager for Hoodoo who attended the event. "It's so much fun to feel all the Hoodoo love."

The event was sponsored by dozens of businesses, including Avid Cider Co., KRFX 92.9 FM, Three Creeks Brewing, Blackstrap, Black Butte Ranch and others.

The sponsors, Wenzel said, donated prizes to Hoodoo specifically for the Wintervention series, which will give away roughly \$50,000 worth of gear

by the time it finishes up in January.

Wenzel said the series was a fun way to get pumped up for the snow season at Hoodoo.

Hoodoo will host events both in the Willamette Valley and on the east side of the Cascades every Tuesday at venues including Avid Cider, the Barn, Bierstein and two more events at General Duffy's in Redmond — on Dec. 13 and Jan. 10.

Additionally, Wenzel said Hoodoo is still looking to fill positions on the hill. Nearly all departments are hiring, she said.

The opening date for Hoodoo is still to be determined, but Wenzel said to check back at skihoodoo.com for details on an opening day announcement, job openings and details on Wintervention.

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Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman

Attendees of the Hoodoo Wintervention event series gathered at General Duffy's Annex on Nov. 22 in Redmond. The event saw giveaways of lift tickets, lodging, gear, skis and more.

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