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Lots of need: Canadian charity bringing clean water to Ukraine

A Canadian charity supplying clean drinking water to developing nations has turned its attention to the plight of refugees fleeing war in Ukraine.

Lifewater Canada has partnered with a group in Poland that is trucking water and other necessities into Ukraine.

Lifewater volunteer Coleton Nickol left for Krakow, Poland on Tuesday, where he will join a team of aid workers helping refugees fleeing war in Ukraine.

“We’re already in contact with some locals who are working to bring refugees from the Ukrainian border and Ukraine itself, driving a couple of buses a day from the border into their facility and also running a large truck into the Ukraine with supplies and then pulling refugees out every single day,” said Nickol.

“They’re working non-stop. They said they’re sleeping three to four hours a night because there is so much work so they wanted help in that. So we’re coming just to lend our hand in any way possible to help with that program.”

At the same time, Nickol will be overseeing the purchase of wholesale water supplies for distribution to refugees fleeing the war. Every day, many of the tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the carnage end up at the Polish border, hungry and dehydrated.

“We’re going to end up buying quite a bit of bottled water that’s sent directly into Ukraine -- basically, all we can get our hands on while we’re there,” said Nickol. “So we’ll try to set up a wholesale supplier for water so we can send that into Ukraine.”

The group Nickol will be working with in Poland is comprised of ex-pat Ukrainians who fled from Crimea after Russia’s invasion there in 2014. They are helping refugees inside Ukraine find their way out of the country and into safe shelter in Poland.

“I’m expecting (it) to be tough – lots of need, and hopefully lots of gaps I can fill,” said Nickol. “It will be packing trucks, loading trucks, unloading trucks, helping refugees get sorted out to where they need to go, and just helping in any way possible. It might even mean cleaning toilets, but that’s okay.”

Prior to the war in Ukraine, Lifewater concentrated its efforts in supplying clean water to people in Haiti and rural Africa – in Kenya, Liberia, and Nigeria.

One of the group’s major donors approached the fund, asking if it could help refugees in Ukraine. That philanthropist matched donations up to \$20,000, an amount the charity surpassed quickly. It presently has close to \$80,000 for its Ukraine Emergency Water Fund and is continuing to take donations.

More information can be found on the agency’s website: www.lifewater.ca.