

# Philadelphia Area Rotary Clubs Raise \$100k For Ukraine Relief: Event Featured Ukrainian Singers and Speakers



\$100,000 raised

by local Rotary Clubs in the Delaware Valley is going to help Ukrainians suffering from the war. More than 150 Rotarians from Southeastern PA District 7450 and their guests attended a “United with Ukraine” fundraiser on June 14th.

The event, held at Lia’s Catering, The Ballrooms at Boothwyn, was highlighted by Slavic cuisine, Ukrainian music, Polka dancing, and powerful speakers, Eugene Luciw, President of the Philadelphia branch of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and Michael Sawkiw, Jr., Executive Vice President of UCCA and Director of the Ukrainian National Information Service, the organization’s Washington D.C. bureau.

Luciw gave an informative and impassioned exposition of the unjust, barbaric and inhuman nature of Russia’s heavily armed attack on Ukraine and her people. He also

placed Moscow's brutality into geopolitical perspective and outlined the separate and distinct nature and history of the Ukrainian nation which goes back to the ninth century and pre-dates Russia's beginnings by approximately 500 years. Sawkiw shared his belief that the U.S. and its allies must provide even more military, economic and humanitarian help than they are currently. One of reasons he cited is that Ukraine is the "breadbasket" of Europe and the world. He said that Russia's intentional interference with the production and shipping of Ukraine's grain around the globe could readily cause a world-wide famine.

Rotary District 7450 Governor Roger Taylor emceed the evening. Poland's District Governor-Elect, Piotr Jankowski and Ukraine's District Governor Volodymyr Bondarenko spoke on video, thanking attendees for their support but also pleading for more help. "The war is far from over. We have to buy a lot of food now to prepare for winter." said Jankowski.

Volunteers from 50 Rotary clubs in the Philadelphia area organized the event to raise money for a special relief fund created to help Ukrainians impacted by the Russian attacks. Rotary District 7450 is working directly with Poland's Rotary District in a coordinated "on the ground" response to the worsening humanitarian crisis. Event proceeds will be used to purchase food, clothing, medical supplies, generators, transportation, and accommodations.

The "United with Ukraine" event was an extension of the original fundraising initiative to help Ukraine that began shortly after the war broke out. Philadelphia Rotary member Ken Myers called a long-time club member, Joan Batory and said, "We have to do something. I don't know what that is or looks like, but we have to mobilize support to provide aid and assistance."

Batory directed Myers to contact Rotary Clubs in Poland saying, "I knew that the clubs were severely impacted by the enormous number of refugees pouring into Poland. If anyone was getting anything done, it had to be the Rotarians there!"

A centerpiece of the June fundraiser was a video appearance by Borys Gudziak, Archbishop of the Philadelphia Ukrainian Catholic Church. Gudziak spoke about Rotary's important humanitarian role in helping Ukraine during this crisis. He spoke of Russian President Putin's feeling threatened by Ukraine's freedom and diversity. Said the Archbishop, "Ukraine had a "virus," democracy, from the point of view of oligarchic

Russia so Putin made a decision to protect the autocracy by killing the “germ” of democracy in Ukraine, trying to crush it.”

The most moving part of the evening was when Ukrainian performer, Yuliya Stupen, led the singing of the national anthems of the United States and Ukraine, while everyone stood at attention. Emcee Roger Taylor read the English translation of the anthem before Stupen sang in Ukrainian.

*“Ukraine has not perished  
Nor her glory; nor her freedom  
Upon us Fellow Ukrainians  
Fate shall smile once more  
Our enemies will vanish  
Like dew in the morning Sun  
And we too shall rule brothers  
In a free land of our own  
We will lay down our souls and our bodies  
To attain our Freedom  
And we’ll show that we are Brothers  
From the Kozak Heritage.”*

The night was capped off by an exciting live auction led by Rotary Peace Scholar and Honorary member of the Philadelphia Rotary club, D.F. Pace. The live and silent auctions raised an additional \$25,000 for needed generators, medical backpacks, and pantry items. Pace’s “day job” is an Inspector in the Philadelphia Police Department but he has also been trained and certified as a professional auctioneer.

All proceeds from the event go to the Ukrainian Relief Fund of the Gundaker Foundation of Rotary District 7450. From there the funds get sent to a special account in Poland used by local aid workers to respond to the needs of Ukrainians now in Poland and those still in their homeland. Donations are still being accepted at [www.Gundaker.org/Ukraine](http://www.Gundaker.org/Ukraine).

By Lisa Leonard