



The Story of Marta

Reuniting a Grateful Ukrainian Family

Marta is a 20-year-old Ukrainian student now living in Romania.* She asked to share her story and express her gratitude to IOCC.

Marta's journey to safety began with her hurried departure from her hometown in eastern Ukraine. For several weeks, she stayed in a friend's apartment in another town. When bombs fell, they found refuge in the building's underground parking garage.

While they sheltered underground, Marta had no access to phone or internet service – and, therefore, no way to communicate with her family. As the situation worsened, she and her friend decided to head farther west.

Marta (center) shared her story of fleeing from Ukraine and finding safety in Romania and help from the Church and IOCC.

As they traveled toward Romania, Marta managed to reconnect with her family, who had also left home. Together, they crossed the border and, along with 25 other refugees, found shelter and support through IOCC and longtime Church partner Federation Filantropia.

"We had so much help from Romanians," Marta shared. "They are very open; they want to give everything they have to help us. I am very thankful for them. We feel ... that we can't continue our daily life because people in our country can't live."

Before the conflict began, Marta was a university student with plans to study for her master's degree

**Pseudonym used
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As the new Church year gets underway, IOCC is grateful for all that your generous support has made possible, and we look forward to the opportunities that this year will bring as – together – we continue to put our faith in action.

IOCC's Prayer Journal, which you likely have already received, is a wonderful collection of examples of the impact of your gifts around the world. This booklet is available at no charge for your group or Sunday School class. I encourage you to order copies at iocc.org/prayerjournal.

We will also celebrate IOCC Sunday in November. This year will be particularly special as we mark IOCC's 30th year of service. Since 1992, your generosity has reached those in need in the spirit of Christ's love around the world.

In this edition of *News & Needs*, you'll find stories of your gifts at work, including relief for Greek families devastated by wildfires, energizing a new generation of leaders at IOCC's Serv-X-Treme youth conference, and support to refugees seeking safety from conflict in Ukraine.

Please accept our deepest thanks for your support. We are grateful for what you have helped IOCC accomplish for 30 years.

Yours In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

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in Europe. For now, she is volunteering at an aid center, translating for Ukrainian refugees so they can receive medical aid and other assistance.

"I'm very thankful for everything ... that my family is with me and safe," Marta said.

Marta is one of millions of Ukrainians who have sought safety in neighboring countries. IOCC is helping those who have arrived in Romania and Poland, while also providing aid in Ukraine itself. Along with shelter, IOCC has partnered with the Church to provide vouchers refugees can use for groceries and other essentials in Poland and Romania. IOCC is also conducting antitrafficking training in Romania, to help keep refugees from being exploited. In Ukraine, IOCC is refurbishing accommodation centers and repairing a parish kitchen to provide meals to displaced people. Needs remain great, and IOCC continues seeking new ways to serve.

IOCC and our partners remain committed to serving the people of Ukraine. For updates on our relief efforts, visit iocc.org/ukraineresponse.



IOCC is serving Ukrainian refugees, including this woman in a Romanian shelter, and providing aid in Ukraine itself.

Greece Fire Response Update

Helping Resin Collectors Recover from Wildfires

For generations, families on the Greek island of Evia have tapped the plentiful Aleppo pine trees for their sticky resin—a vital component of paint, plastics, solvents, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

Last year, in just a few days, their livelihood was literally reduced to ashes. Wildfires tore through Evia's forests, destroying homes, businesses, and, for many, a way of life.

IOCC has been on the ground assessing needs and providing aid since August 2021 and has directly helped over 1,700 people on Evia—including distributing supermarket vouchers every month to more than 370 families, among them 300 resin-

Resin collectors Panagiota and Vassilis are among the families on Evia that IOCC has helped after destructive fires.



Pine forests have been a source of income for families on Evia for generations. Widespread fires destroyed that livelihood in just a few days.

collecting households, plus families whose homes, businesses, or both burned. In addition, IOCC has so far supplied in excess of 600 tons of livestock feed to families with small farms—among them resin collectors Panagiota and Vassilis.

Vassilis shared, “We still cannot figure out how, with just a few staff, IOCC was able to track us down throughout the vast territory of Northern Evia and give us such aid... Thank you for this extremely useful aid that continues to help us make ends meet after last year's [2021] disastrous fires.”

It will take about 20–25 years for newly planted pines to grow large enough to supply resin. During that time, families who tapped resin for a living will have to rebuild and discover new ways to support themselves. IOCC, with the support of donors like the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the National Philoptochos Society, the Jaharis Family Foundation, and the George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation, is committed to long-term recovery work in Greece.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.

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The Power of Serving Others

Learning and Connecting at Serv-X-Treme

High-school students from five different Orthodox jurisdictions experienced the power of service at IOCC's annual Serv-X-Treme youth leadership conference in Minneapolis.

This year, IOCC's US Program team welcomed 13 rising seniors to the weeklong conference to cultivate a deeper understanding of Orthodox philanthropy and *diakonia* (service). They participated in leadership-building activities, workshops, and hands-on projects with the Salvation Army and Hearts & Hammers. They also received training from Agate Housing and Services, Second Harvest Heartland, and IOCC US Program staff. The conference provided firsthand experience of what it means to minister to people in need.

A week spent in service, prayer, and workshops had a profound effect on the participants. One student, Anna, said, "To say this week has left an impact is an understatement. [I gained] new friendships, a new connection with my faith, and an expanded outlook on my personal life and the world around me. I have discovered and been taught so much."

It was a powerful experience for everyone involved. As another participant, Grace, said, "I gained more insight into ways to serve other people in everyday interactions in one week than I've learned in my 17 years of life."

At the end of the week, the young adults left with newfound skills and knowledge that they will make part of their daily lives and share with others. Andrew added, "I learned a lot here, ... and I hope to [do] something like this again in the future." IOCC is grateful and honored to be a part of their journey.



At this summer's service-leadership youth conference, participants volunteered locally (above) and trained with IOCC staff (below) in home build skills.

