

WHAT WE DO AND WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN VOLUNTEERS TO WORK THIS SUMMER WITH MOTHERS AND CHILDREN DISPLACED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE.
-ROBERT GAMBLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THIS CHILD HERE, INC.

I manage a US 501c3 non-profit called This Child Here (www.thischildhere.org).*

We work with mothers and children, who are displaced by this war. We are located in the city of Izmail in the southwest of Ukraine on Danube which is the border to Romania.

We buy groceries for these families when they first arrive. We have a center for creative activities and one for sports. We are open 7 days a week with programs in art, music, exercise, and tennis, and classes in english. Kids from age 6 to 18 come. Mothers come for a time designed for them on Sunday afternoons, led by a psychologist. We have about 85 families participating in our programs. .

The difference between what we do and what most other aid organizations do is we address the emotional and psychological damage these people have suffered. We are always building our resilient community, we provide an environment for healthy childhood development by the activities we design for mothers and children. Read "The Body Keeps Score," by Bessel van der Kolk, and you will see that there are many ways in addition to talk therapy to deal with trauma. Love, affirmation, trusting relationships, exercise, and play in the sea all can be healing.

The other event we have is camp. Like last year, our camp will be held in resort built in Soviet times, in Varna, Bulgaria. You may be surprised to know that Varna is very clean city, right on the very clear waters of the Black Sea. We have programs, time in the pool, and time in the sea. There will be three camps with 50 people coming to each. I can use 2 volunteers for each camp.

GREETINGS VOLUNTEERS, This notice will be posted nationally. This is what we are looking for: young adults, college age and up to attend a **camp for Ukrainian mothers, youth, and children displaced by the war in Ukraine.**

Essentially, your job is to hang out with the youth. They will be very interested in meeting an American young adult. You will find ways to communicate with them: cell phone translator, with your hands, saying the names of actors in films or musicians. A lot of kids learn English by watching re-runs of Friends in English. In my opinion, most youth in Ukraine are kind hearted; you don't see arrogance or cynicism. They are often hi-tech aware.

It can take a little time to **build trust... This is a big issue in Ukraine**, especially with the war. Who can you trust? Americans often begin by digging for information: what do your parents do? What happened to you in the war? I wouldn't ask this....someone may be dead; the cat or dog they love may still be in that empty home in the war zone. They may have a single mom because dad is no longer around.

Learn how to **walk right up to young people without intimidating them.** Keep your body, shoulders, arms, hands relaxed. "Privyet" means hello. Let them begin the conversation. Try to connect with as many as possible, but there will be a few that you will be closer to. Be careful what you promise. It may not be so easy to invite them to America.

This is probably not what you thought you would hear as a job description, but really, I'm less interested in what you DO with these young people than how you can BE with them. **You must LIKE KIDS and be willing to hang with them to come on this trip.**

There are three camps, one week each between the dates: **July 11-31. Fifty people, mothers, children and staff** will attend each. **I am looking for 4 young adults for each camp.** For either, you would need to fly from the states on the day before as it takes an overnight flight to get to Varna, Bulgaria, or fly to Sofia, Bulgaria and take a train. I or someone else can meet you at the airport or train station in Varna.

You will be working with people from a country at war with Russia. You will **learn more than you can imagine** about what is happening here. If you are at all interested in non-profit work as self-employed or with a large non-profit, or work with youth, children or families who are victims of trauma, or international anything, or even medicine, this experience will **look very good on your resume.**

Regretfully, there is no salary and you will need to pay for your transportation by air to Varna. Round trip Flights from Atlanta to Varna, Bulgaria on **Austrian Airlines last year were about \$990. We will pay for your room and board.** If you wish to come to Varna a few days early, hotels are about \$35-\$40 a night. I know you think, Bulgaria! But Varna is one of the cleanest cities I have seen, and the summer weather is warm but not humid.

If you are connected to any local church, you may get some help with funding. **As we are funded primarily by Presbyterian Churches (USA), you can approach any local PCUSA church by talking with the pastor and writing a letter to the "Clerk of Session," and ask for help with funding. I'll make a call on your behalf.** You will need to go back to them and talk about your experience. We have received some **funding from Rotary**, that's also an option.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to come. I have had several volunteers in the past, especially in those years when I worked with street kids in Odessa, Ukraine. I've written letters of reference. Some have gone into the Red Cross, some to work with aid organizations in Africa and the Middle East. Many have found their own way into organizations helping make ours a better world.

All the best,
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*I've been working in Ukraine since 2006. For 15 of those years, I started with street kids (there were thousands back then), began programs in orphanages to build community to lessen the number of kids who would take to the streets. By 2013, we were training Ukrainian foster families to take kids from orphanages. When the war began in 2014, we started training teens in peacemaking techniques and doing group work with the children of soldiers. Since the invasion began in Feb 2022, all our work is with people displaced by this war.