



Alexandra Wimley/Po

Ukrainians in Pittsburgh heartened by military advances



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Nearly seven months after Russia invaded Ukraine, the war continues and so do the prayers and support from the Ukrainian people in the United States.



For example, St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie continues to aid in supporting the troops — it has sent more than 25,000 pounds of food since the war began Feb.



24. And its sister church, St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church in McKeesport, also has sent care packages to Ukraine.

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On Saturday, the Carnegie church hosted its annual Ukrainian food festival, where people who came from far and wide mingled with Ukrainians who remain heartened by advances the Ukraine military has made against the Russians in the past few days.



*Lisa Ryan, of McCandless, prepares meals at the Ukrainian Food Festival at St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie, Saturday, September 10.
Alexandra Wimley/Post-Gazette*

Julia Skorija, of McKeesport, said her whole immediate family is in Kyiv, and her brother, a draftee, is fighting with Ukraine's armed forces.

She said that on the first day of the war, her mother was wounded in the head by Russian fire and her family was forced to evacuate to a safer place. Ms. Skorija said she stays in touch with her family, sends packages when she can and is saddened by the human cost of war.

"I'm not happy about any of this because it costs Ukraine at least 100 soldiers a day," Ms. Skorija said. "So for me I am glad that Ukraine is trying to play the offensive, but I also am sad because I have relatives fighting in the war. And there is just so much danger and harm to the people there and I worry for them."

Ms. Skorija said she is glad that the United States continues to send military and other aid to Ukraine and is pleased by the community support she has received here.

"Just yesterday there were like three or four people who came up to me and said we're not from Ukraine but that they have been seeing so much about this in the media that they wanted to learn and donate," she said.



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*Fr. John Charest, right, talks with an attendee of the Ukrainian Food Festival at St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie, Saturday, September 10.
Alexandra Wimley/Post-Gazette*

The Rev. John Charest, the priest at St. Peter and St. Paul, said since the very first day of the attack he knew the war would not end quickly.

“I’m not surprised that the war has lasted so long because I know how strong the people there are. They are fighting for their homes — it’s not just about fighting the enemy, we have to take care of our own.”

Mr. Charest said he is happy to see the recent developments of Russian forces backing out of areas in the Kharkiv area, and is uplifted by the continued morale boosts both from the people here as well as in Ukraine.

“I think we have all seen the war pictures and the families being taken from their homes, but the love and care the soldiers showed throughout ... like the singing to the children and playing instruments ... it is so inspiring to us here,” Mr. Charest said. “So here the church is just doing our best to support them and keep their morale high, too.”

Ms. Skorija said what saddens her the most is knowing that many more will die or lose their homes in her country.





An attendee looks at information and items available to show support for Ukraine at the Ukrainian Food Festival at St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie, Saturday, September 10.

Alexandra Wimley/Post-Gazette

“I know that in all of those small villages, 20% of the population is still there because they are old, and even though they won’t have heat and won’t be able to survive the winter, they are staying because it is their home,” Ms. Skorija said.

Ms. Skorija and Rev. Charest both said the best way for Americans to help is to continue to support the Ukrainian people — both financially and otherwise.

“Don’t stop praying, don’t start being a ‘Russia-phobe’ — it is not the time for that and we don’t need any more aggression,” Rev. Charest said. “I know times are tough, but people’s support means so much. And if you can support financially, I can tell you that is going toward helping Ukrainians stay safe and keeping the morale high.”



Lisa Ryan, of McCandless, helps customers at the Ukrainian Food Festival at St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie, Saturday, September 10.

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