**From Central Illinois to Ukraine**
OSF HealthCare Newsroom
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Chris Manson and his 7-year-old daughter were hanging out at home when images from the war in Ukraine came on the television. Before he could change the channel, Manson was facing tough questions, as he puts it, from a young girl who was trying to understand the suffering she saw.

Her words got Manson wondering if there was some way – even a small one – that people in central Illinois could do something to help. Working for one of the largest Catholic health care systems in the state of Illinois, it seemed a natural fit.

At first, Manson just thought about sending medical supplies. To make sure they would be needed, he first contacted the Ukrainian consulate. Working in government relations for Peoria-based OSF HealthCare, Manson knew how to navigate the system to get the best answer. They enthusiastically accepted any offer of help and provided a list of the most critically-needed supplies, ones that were also easy to ship overseas.

As he started to think about the possibilities, Manson decided not to stop with just the supplies, but also something to transport them and the medical teams needed to provide care in the war-torn country – an ambulance.

What started as a crazy idea as Manson calls it, moved forward quickly after he had a conversation with Andrew Rand, CEO of Advanced Medical Transport (AMT), the ambulance provider in Peoria.

**SOT Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations – OSF HealthCare.**
(I called Andrew and to his credit, I explained what had happened, very quickly after he said, 'you know, it's the least we can do. We're happy to help. We'll get you an ambulance. Do you want gas or diesel?' That was really what he asked me was, which do you prefer? And I was blown away by the generosity and his willingness to just jump right in. And from that point forward, we're kind of like, okay, I think this is actually going to happen if I can figure out a way to get the ambulance over to Ukraine. :26)

With the ambulance secured, Manson now had to get supplies donated. The generosity of OSF HealthCare, AMT, the Peoria Fire Department, OSF Mission Partners (employees), and even first responders from as far away as Virginia soon had it packed to the ceiling and then some.

**SOT Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations – OSF HealthCare.**
(Once we were sure that we had an aircraft to move that ambulance, in a very short time period, literally less than a week, I think it was probably four or five days, we put the word out on a Monday that we had an ambulance that we had an aircraft that we're going to do this. We had a blessing ceremony for the ambulance, and we invited Mission Partners to bring either a clotting agent for people bleeding, or the survival blankets that we were also told were needed, and Mission Partners just delivered in droves :35)

Working with the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America (UMANA), the ambulance was loaded on to a Boeing 747 cargo air craft in Chicago on March 29 along with 356 pallets of supplies collected by UMANA – 86 tons in all.

Like an expectant father, Manson had to await word from each stop along the ambulance's journey.

**SOT Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations – OSF HealthCare.**
(I was most nervous until I saw the ambulance literally on the 747. Once it was on the 747 and I'd met with the Ukrainian consulate in person and seeing everything on the plane and in motion, I started to kind of take a breath and say, 'okay, this is happening.' I saw when it landed in Luxembourg, I saw that it had been transported to Poland. It's my understanding it'll be brought into a certain point and they'll take out most of the extra medical supplies that they will just take to probably one hospital to be distributed to others. The ambulance then will pretty quickly move forward into either a combat zone or another area of the conflict and it'll be put right to use :42)

As of April 7, the ambulance was enroute to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health.

With one ambulance delivery under his belt, Manson is not stopping there. Other health systems and ambulance companies have been reaching out to see if there are other opportunities to help alleviate the suffering in Ukraine.

**SOT Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations – OSF HealthCare.**
(I was thinking it was just going to be this one opportunity, to really give central Illinois a chance – not to get into the fight - but just to do something and help out a little bit, to show our solidarity with people in Ukraine. But I will tell you, once we were successful in getting that ambulance on that aircraft and getting it sent, I have now received calls from California, from other places in the country, basically saying, hey, you know, this works, we can get American ambulances over there to the Ukraine. Get the Ukrainians more. What do you think? Are there other opportunities? :37)

As an added bonus, a 7-year-old girl is seeing what can be done through a simple act of helping others.

**SOT Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations – OSF HealthCare.**
(This is a horrible situation, this war. But the way everyone's reacting, everyone just wants to help and that's been really cool. And so I think my daughter is seeing that, and I think if anything else, I hope she's just seen that there's a lot of good in this world :18)