

White Sox honor retired Bloomingdale nurse who traveled to Slovakia to serve Ukrainian refugees



During her time in Slovakia, Joan Morris of Bloomingdale worked alongside other volunteers, cooking and cleaning -- even helping prepare a church for Easter -- while helping families get needed resources to make it to their next destination. The Chicago White Sox honored Morris, a charter member of its Volunteer Corps, Friday with an in-game ceremony. *Courtesy of Chicago White Sox*

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Joan Morris of Bloomingdale dates her love of the Chicago White Sox to when she was in seventh grade. She and her twin sister, Jane, won free tickets to games -- in both seventh and eighth grade -- for having perfect attendance and straight A's.

A devoted fan ever since, she is a charter member of the White Sox Volunteer Corps, which started in 2009.

During Friday night's game against the Los Angeles Angels, the White Sox turned the table on her. They honored Morris with an in-game recognition ceremony after the first inning for her devotion to serving others, including refugees fleeing Ukraine.

"She's an inspiration," said Colin McGauley, a spokesman for the White Sox.

The organization honored Morris for her long career in nursing, including nearly 30 years at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in its emergency room and trauma care units, and the last five at Ascension Alexian Brothers Hospice, as a hospice nurse.

Morris even came out of retirement last year to work vaccine clinics in DuPage County and help screen patients in the ER and ICU at Ascension Alexian Brothers.

But even more compelling was her recent volunteer trip to Slovakia, to help Ukrainian refugees crossing the border.

"That's why I retired, so that I can do things like this," Morris said of her impromptu trip. "Just seeing that so much was being done, why not do it? Going there helped me more than it helped them."

Morris left March 28 for Slovakia, with as little as one week's notice. She went as a volunteer with Lutheran Church Charities, based in Northbrook. Morris and another volunteer spent two weeks at Ukraine Mission Center in Slovakia and made two trips to the border.

"Joan's willingness -- with little notice -- to go to help care for handicapped children, displaced women and children from Ukraine, with her mercy heart and calmness, brought love and healing in a difficult situation," says Tim Hetzner, president and CEO of Lutheran Church Charities.

For Morris, this was not a medical mission but a humanitarian one. She worked alongside other volunteers, cooking and cleaning -- even preparing a church for Easter -- while helping families get resources to make it to their next destination.

At each trip to the border, she worked two 12-hour shifts handing out food and travel packs to the refugees.

"It was so hard for them, not only leaving their demolished homes and family," Morris said, "but coming to a country where they didn't know the language."

Morris pointed to her 12 years of going on medical mission trips to Guatemala with Advocate Lutheran General as the inspiration for

doing international service. She found it rewarding, seeing how much support refugees were given and how thankful they were.

"They lost so much," Morris said of the people she encountered, "and yet they were so appreciative. It was so impressive."