

Medical Maverick

UIC alumna Sol Savchuk BS '18 was a medical student at Stanford University when war broke out in her native country. She was born and raised in Zabolotiv, a small town in western Ukraine. Not long after Russian tanks and troops rolled into the country, Savchuk sprang into action, organizing a group of medical and computer science students to found TeleHelp Ukraine, a no-cost health care provider that serves hundreds of individuals in Ukraine and Poland.

"The value of having a community, and being able to mobilize it to work together toward a common goal otherwise unachievable, is something I learned at UIC and have carried both through my work at TeleHelp and many other projects and endeavors," she says.

Savchuk first came to UIC to study neuroscience through the Honors College and prepare for medical school. She says she received a solid foundation in science that has served her throughout her training, and upon graduation, she headed west to Stanford's campus to become a doctor.



COURTESY: SOL SAVCHUK BS '18

Two months after launching TeleHelp Ukraine, Savchuk and the team of volunteers (there are now more than 100 who manage TeleHelp's operations) had overcome countless cultural, legal, logistical and other hurdles to offer health care in an active war zone. In May 2023, TeleHelp had its 1,000th appointment.

Today, TeleHelp is growing its network of in-country partners to reach the less technologically literate and those without electricity and internet. The nonprofit also plans to set up additional Starlink satellite internet service and pop-up clinics to offer medical care, medicine and lab work for some who have gone months without care. The expansion adds costs, and the need to raise additional funds.

"There are a lot of exciting projects we're growing toward – we're very much on the rise and planning for the long haul," says Savchuk, who will step aside as executive director as she moves into her third year of medical school. "There are people to take over the torch and continue growing this."
—*Matt Beardmore*