16 November

Heart of Azovstal trainers visit Mariupol defenders recently released from Russian captivity



Representatives of the Heart of Azovstal project have visited several hospitals where Mariupol defenders who recently returned from Russian captivity are in

rehabilitation. With them were four post-traumatic growth trainers, who also defended Mariupol and survived captivity. The trainers shared their own experience of returning to civilian life. The Heart of Azovstal has supported more than 8,000 Mariupol defenders, directly or through their families, and will continue to support those who have just returned.

What happened during the hospital visits?

Representatives of the Heart of Azovstal visited several hospitals where Mariupol defenders recently released from Russian captivity are receiving rehabilitation. With them were the project's post-traumatic growth trainers: Maksym Polupanov, Kyrylo Tiurniev, Oleksandr Didur and Serhii Yarovyi.

The trainers talked about the challenges that released defenders may face and how to return to civilian life step by step. The team also explained the project's support system and confirmed that the Heart of Azovstal will continue to support the defenders.

Why does support from fellow defenders matter?

Support from people with the same experience helps defenders feel they are ??? alone with what they have been through. All four trainers took part in the defence of Mariupol, survived captivity and have already adapted to life after release. This peer-to-peer approach helps recently released defenders see real opportunities for their own recovery.

How does the Heart of Azovstal help Mariupol defenders?

The Heart of Azovstal offers a full system of support for defenders and their children, parents, spouses, widows and widowers. Its programmes include:

- Return: support for defenders released from captivity, including a digital box with a laptop, headphones and a smart watch.

- Health: prosthetics and physical and psychological rehabilitation across Ukraine.
- Community: peer-to-peer support, as well as sports, cultural and advocacy events.
- Future: education, retraining, skills development, help with starting a business and learning foreign languages.
- At Home: apartments for Mariupol defenders with serious disabilities. So far, 419 apartments have been provided.

What is the goal of post-traumatic growth support?

> "Over more than three years of work, the Heart of Azovstal has built a comprehensive support system that more than 8,000 Mariupol defenders have already received, either directly or through their families. It is based on post-traumatic growth methods. Drawing on our own experience of supporting the defenders of Mariupol, we adapt international practices to Ukrainian realities and actively apply them in our work. Our goal is to make post-traumatic growth a new norm of support for veterans and all Ukrainians affected by the war. It is especially important that this support begins as early as possible – from the first steps after returning from captivity," said **Tetiana Maltseva, Director of the NGO Heart of Azovstal**.

What is the Heart of Azovstal?

The Heart of Azovstal is a project that helps those who defended Mariupol from 24 February until 20 May 2022, and their families. It is part of the Steel Front military initiative of our shareholder Rinat Akhmetov, which supports the Ukrainian military. For the defenders, returning from captivity is only the start of a new stage of life, with recovery and adaptation ahead. The Heart of Azovstal aims to help them move forward step by step.