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Local Children's Author Teams with Ukrainian Illustrator During War

Nicholasville, Ken. – Jodie Campbell, a Kentucky children's book author, is taking steps to support her book's illustrator, a Ukrainian citizen who is trying to live and work in a warzone.

Campbell is a local public health nurse who is on a journey to fulfill a lifelong dream: self-publishing her first children's book. When searching online for a freelance illustrator, she connected with [Alexey Chystikov](#), of Kyiv, whose experience bringing memorable characters to life caught her attention.

Just one month into their working relationship, Chystikov stopped responding to emails and subsequently missed a deadline. Campbell soon learned that Kyiv had been struck by Russian missiles, and Chystikov was without power for several days.

"Up until then, he never missed a deadline," Campbell said. "I just knew something was wrong."

Several days later, Chystikov made contact with Campbell and apologized for the late work. Campbell assured him that his safety was paramount. Together, they devised a system that was not deadline-based so that Chystikov could continue working on the book without pressure.

"I will complete my children's book with Alexey as my illustrator, no matter how long it takes," said Campbell. "We are moving forward together as the situation in Ukraine allows. This book means just as much to him as it does to me, and I want to publish it as a team."

During the holiday season, Campbell raised nearly \$1,000 to help Chystikov financially while his workflow is inconsistent.

"When there is no power, he cannot work," said Campbell. "Even when there is power, if a missile alert siren goes off, he must stop whatever he is doing and shelter in place. If that wasn't chaotic enough, add the mental toll it must take knowing others are dying all around your country, never knowing when your city is the next target. Alexey is a strong young man. He and many other Ukrainians need our ongoing support."

As of January 2023, the book, *There Was A Zookeeper*, is about eighty percent finished, with the last few illustrations being finalized by Chystikov.

"This spring we will be ready to go to press and then release this passion project out into the world for families to enjoy," said Campbell. "I'll be thrilled when that day comes, but I feel blessed to be on this journey, no matter its duration, with amazing people like Alexey."

To learn more about Campbell's work, visit <https://www.facebook.com/jodiecampbellauthor>.

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