Holi celebrated across the globe

On March 18, more than one billion people around the world celebrated Holi (pronounced hoe-lee). Known as the festival of colors, the holiday marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring for people who follow the Hindu religion. Holi also signifies the triumph of good over evil and dark over light.

Hindus have been celebrating Holi since at least the 4th century. At festivals, people sing and dance around bonfires, throw water and water balloons at fellow revelers, and toss brightly colored powder at one another. Each color has a different traditional meaning. For example, red represents love and green symbolizes new beginnings.

Last year, Holi festivals were limited due to the pandemic, but many restrictions have now been lifted. This year, in India, large and festive crowds gathered in the streets. One of the biggest Holi celebrations in the US is in Spanish Fork, Utah, where thousands of people gather in front of an important Hindu temple to enjoy the day.

Countries take in Ukrainians

As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine approached the one-month mark, more than 3.5 million Ukrainians have fled their country by train, by car, and on foot to escape the violence. Nations around the world are opening their doors to what the United Nations has called the largest flow of refugees since World War Two (1939–1945).

Most refugees are women, children, and the elderly because Ukrainian men between ages 18 and 60 must stay and serve in the military. Of Ukraine’s neighboring nations, Poland has taken in more than 2 million refugees, but the mayors of its two largest cities said they cannot accommodate any more without running out of resources. More than 500,000 people have been accepted in Romania, more than 300,000 each in Moldova and Hungary, and more than 250,000 in Slovakia.

THE GIFT OF READING

Jennifer Williams is on a mission to give away one million books to kids who wouldn’t otherwise have access to them, and she recently hit number 90,500. The fifth-grade teacher from Virginia, whose nickname is “the Book Lady,” buys many of the books herself. “My goal is to make people’s lives better,” she said.