

Christ Church - Ukraine Centre Update



Our two coordinators would like to thank you for all the support you have provided in fundraising and by volunteers generously giving their time. Ludmila (left), a lawyer from Kyiv, who moved here with her daughter Daria, age 17 and oversees the many cultural activities.

Jeremy McTeague, a founding member, makes sure everything runs like clockwork. 'We realise how worthwhile the Centre has been when we see how much pleasure it brings to our Ukrainian friends who pack the hall every Sunday and we could not have done it without the selfless help of our volunteers,' said Jeremy.



Highlights

28 April 2022
The Centre de Jour Ukrainien opens. Free clothes and language classes

Summer 2022
We join Forces with Ukraine Reborn - founded by Ukrainian ex-pats

February 2023
Our Ukrainian friends start running the shop, registration and now the teas

May 2023
Electronic registration system introduced

September 2023
From emergency Centre to community Centre

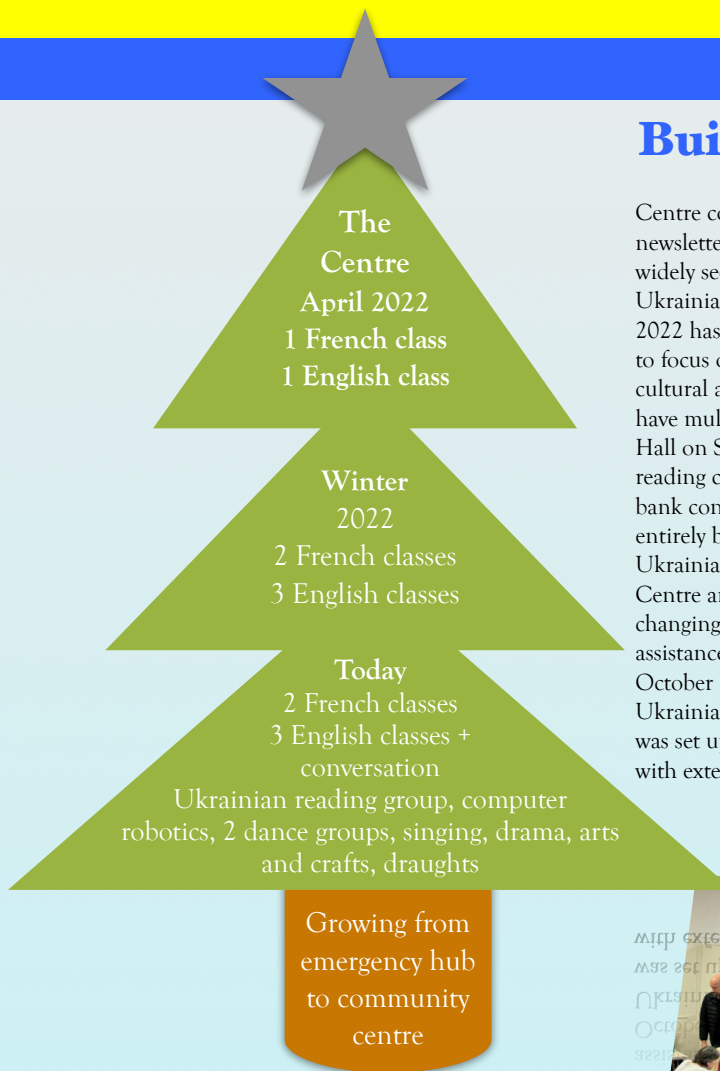
October 2023
USpring programme launched to help Ukrainians integrate and find work

Attendance
soars from 3 the day it opened to 12,000 visits by December 2023 with up to 150 people present on Sundays



Building the future together

Centre coordinator, Jeremy McTeague, described in the monthly newsletter in August 2023 the steady evolution of the Centre. It is widely seen as one of the most successful initiatives helping Ukrainians in the Canton. The refugee crisis that erupted in March 2022 has now subsided and the Ukrainian community is beginning to focus on more regular priorities such as education, work and cultural activities. The language classes on Thursdays and Sundays have multiplied while children and adults pack into the Scots Kirk Hall on Sundays for dancing, chess, singing, arts and crafts and reading classes for Ukrainian youngsters. The very successful clothing bank continues to operate but like most of the services, it is now run entirely by our Ukrainian friends who also prepare the refreshments. Ukrainian volunteers are also responsible for safeguarding at the Centre and registration. Jeremy said, "We have adapted to the changing situation. Our priority now must be to provide constructive assistance with finding work, integration and practical advice." In October USpring was launched as a co-mentoring service to pair Ukrainians with professionals working and living in Switzerland. It was set up by Herb Riband and Dmytro Milashchuk, two volunteers with extensive experience in this field.



Rosemary Raedler - Centre volunteer and treasurer

"I think I can safely say that our Christ Church volunteers have learnt a lot from our Ukrainian friends - resilience, courage, optimism, and adaptation. A huge lesson to us all. We have also greatly enjoyed working at the Centre and appreciate the solidarity between the 3 churches. We have really got to know each other. A lovely win win experience!"

Just two of our very valuable volunteers

Grandmother of four, Susan Szymanski (below), is one of our volunteers from Christ Church. A retired nurse, she moved to Switzerland 51 years ago from the UK. She was among the first to sign up. 'I wanted to help refugees and I enjoy doing what I am asked to do without having to make any serious decisions. I think the Ukrainians feel they have a safe place to come and be with their compatriots. "I feel I am helping just a little bit and I have so enjoyed getting to know all the helpers in the other churches and the English-speaking community. I feel a real solidarity among us all."

