

8 September 2022

# Momentum

## Meeting demand: The dramatic growth of the Day Centre for Ukrainians

### Highlights:

- **Visitor numbers climb to 140 per week**
- **Language classes & counselling sessions fully subscribed**
- **Summer camp helped over 100 kids**
- **MoU signed with Ukraine Reborn to formalize collaboration on various projects**

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### How can you can help?

We especially value volunteers, and appreciate donations of clothes, money and food.

If you can help please call: 076 558 6805 or email us.

Since the day Centre opened at the end of April, it has welcomed over 1,000 people. It has over 35 volunteers of which five are Ukrainians who have fled the war in their country.

The Centre offers French and English language classes every Thursday. Over 15 people attend the French classes and about 8 -10 attend the English classes.

As of last Sunday an additional English class has started with over 20 adult students, as well as a French class for children.

Ukrainian psychologists and counsellors from Ukraine Reborn have held counselling sessions with over 40 children. Group sessions have been planned to begin shortly. These activities are complemented by

weekly arts & crafts sessions for children and adolescents. Which are continuously oversubscribed.

The clothes store is a major success and to date thousands of items weighing hundreds of kilos have been donated to visitors.

The pressure to secure more



clothes has been relieved by the C3 church and a Vaud-based organisation which regularly delivers generous quantities to

us. One very successful service is hairdressing voluntarily done by Kateryna who escaped from the Ukraine earlier this year.

Funding for the Centre started off well and we have subsequently received donations totalling over CHF 12,000. Applications to funding organisations for larger amounts are underway.

Expenses are running at over CHF 700 per month with the main costs being food and stationery.

The Centre has now formalized its status as a not-for-profit association. It has a governing board comprising two members of each of the founding churches. It now has a bank account and can receive donations which are tax deductible.

## Meet the volunteers: Lyudmila Bahmut & Volodymyr Soroka

**Lyudmila Bahmut** arrived from Kyiv with her 16-year-old daughter a month after the war started. She remains anxious for her fellow Ukrainians. A lawyer by profession and trained mediator, she now plays a pivotal role at the Centre where she spends more than four hours a day:



“With other volunteers at the Centre I try to help our compatriots feel safe, we support each other and we organise stimulating and useful activities for children and adults. Social integration, learning French and finding a job, are

the biggest hurdles people face.” Lyudmila says they are grateful to the Centre which provides invaluable help: “It supports our initiatives, helps with clothing and provides moral support. It gives us a base where we can pursue projects linked to our culture and people.”

**Volodymyr Soroka** is a well-known singer, musician, composer, and a fluent Esperanto speaker who originally trained as an engineer, Volodymyr Soroka has ambitious ideas for Ukraine’s culture while living in Switzerland. He arrived with his pianist wife, Pavlina, in April. His two adult sons are supporting the Ukraine war effort. As an active volunteer at the Ukraine Centre, he was a key player in the Independence Day festival. He has set

his sights next on Ukraine’s national day of culture and literature on 9 November. An experienced events organiser, he hopes to promote Ukraine art and music beyond Lausanne. From

his home in Kyiv, he founded Interkulturo, a non profit association which has supported more than

500 arts projects. His name means magpie, and he has collected experiences as the bird collects objects. You can find Volodymyr’s music on YouTube. He will teach you to converse in Esperanto in just three days, if you would like.



## Who we are, what we do and how we do it

### Volunteers' Apéro

17h30 on 15 September at the Scots Kirk. Come along and meet each other, especially those great folk who usually come on a different day or help from home! We'll provide the nibbles. Bring a bottle!

The Day Centre for Ukrainian refugees was opened on 28 April. Founded by Our Lady of Faith, Christ Church and the Scots Kirk, it is an ecumenical initiative whose volunteers provide support to people fleeing from Ukraine, irrespective of language, race, faith or gender. Its services are free.

Based at the Scots Kirk, it opens on Thursday and Sunday afternoons with various stand-alone classes and activities taking place throughout the week. Gillean MacLean, Minister of the Scots Kirk and president of the Centre explains why it was established: "We need to help people fleeing Ukraine who continue to suffer the most dreadful loss and upheaval. We have the means and the capacity to offer them a warm practical welcome and to help meet their physical and social needs."

Jeremy McTeague who manages the Centre describes the services: "We provide a safe space where people are able to exchange news and advice and form relationships with their compatriots. Our volunteers offer a listening ear, help strengthen the resilience and self-confidence of visitors, and help with local knowledge and to deal with local administration. Vitaly, we provide the space and respite refugees need from their host families and vice-versa."



The Centre serves as a focal point for experts and specialists to visit as well as being a collection point for donations of clothes and personal items. We welcome lots of children and provide games and homework help – especially French.

The Centre's volunteers undergo safe-guarding training and undertake a multitude of tasks including accompanying refugees to meetings and/or liaising with the authorities, health services and schools. The Centre collaborates with other local volunteer organisations, experts and donors so that we can deliver quality services to as many people as possible. We are lucky to have established an effective relationship with Ukraine Reborn which specialises in employment advice and provides translators, teachers and counsellors. We are extremely fortunate to have several locally

based Ukrainian volunteers whose invaluable help has increased the scope and scale of our services to levels we didn't dare hope to achieve," says Desdemona de Souza who runs the volunteering system.

### Ukraine Independence Day Celebrations

The 24 August marked Ukraine Independence Day and our Ukrainian community organised an outstanding celebration on an unbelievable scale. They boast a number of extraordinarily talented professional musicians, artists and other performers. In just three weeks, a team of 50 people from the Centre and our partners, Ukraine Reborn organised a 200-strong march from Riponne to the Scots Kirk. They produced a music concert, organised workshops to make traditional Ukrainian keepsakes such as motanka dolls, sold Ukrainian produce such as home-made honey spice loaf, socks knitted in the country's yellow and blue colours by a 90-year-old grandmother and served up typical Ukrainian delicacies. 300 people joined our Ukrainian friends in making this a day of





## Ukraine Independence Day Celebrations

rejoicing, sharing and remembrance. The march was greeted enthusiastically with hugs, cheers and tooting horns from onlookers, who were handed fresh flowers. Some bystanders even joined the march. One of the principal organisers, at the Centre, Lyudmila Bahmut said: “This year we felt extraordinarily proud of being strong, courageous, united Ukrainians who passionately love our country. We were also made aware again of the incredible support we are receiving from the Swiss and the rest of the world.”



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**Our new rota sign-up app!**

We're keen to make signing up for the Thursday and Sunday sessions as easy as possible and to avoid having too many (or too few) people helping out. Just click [here](#) to sign up for October and November!

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**Why not send us your stories and photos!**

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