

Momentum

November 2022

Demand remains high

The Centre has more than 100 new registrations per month. Visitor totals have reached 2000 since April.

Christmas is coming

Daria (pictured below), from our partner Ukrainian association, Together. She is one of our many Christmas elves making decorations.



Ukraine fundraising meal

9 Dec at 19:00 in Belmont.

Come and enjoy traditional, home-style Ukrainian cooking to raise money for refugee children this Christmas. See attached flyer.

Flagging it up

Our coordinator Ludmila and her daughter Daria were moved to receive a flag from the battle front, after raising money for medical supplies. It was signed by soldiers in Bahkmut, in the town that shares the family name.



Far from home: the struggle to find accommodation



Kataryna, Makar and Biata: among the lucky ones

Trying to find suitable accommodation is the biggest concern for Ukrainians who have sought refuge in Switzerland, according to a survey carried out by the Ukraine Day Centre. There are more than 6,000 Ukrainians in Suisse-romande who have fled Russian aggression, which has specifically targeted civilians. Army barracks have been opened up, and exhibition halls turned into temporary shelters for migrants from all countries.

Desperate for a safe haven, the Ukrainians are grateful for their generous welcome yet half of those who replied to our questionnaire said they were struggling with accommodation for various reasons such as: some host families can no longer support them, one mother is living in a hotel with her two children, one couple is expecting a baby and needs more room, and another person is in a house facing demolition. EVAM, which is responsible in Vaud for helping newly arrived migrants, is the first port of call, but then it urges people to use estate agents who demand complex paperwork and often a Swiss guarantor.

Elena, has been lucky. She found a flat in Lausanne but it is only for three months. Her host family had to move to Singapore. Suddenly homeless, she found a shared room in a hostel. The only electricity was by an extension cable from the front door, and there was only room to sit or lie on the bed. « When I was sick, there was nowhere to drink hot water because the kitchen closed after 10 p.m.,” she said. Others have been turned down by landlords repeatedly. For some it is too expensive, particularly if they cannot find work. In certain cases, charities have stepped in to help. However, for others their situation has turned out well. Kataryna Lysenko, and her two children describe their host, Monique Pralong, as ‘wonderful.’ Monique found her initial doubts, about sharing her home in Cheseaux, were quickly dispelled. They share the odd meal and discuss cultural differences. “I must say I have been very lucky, the Lysenko family is lovely to live with. The problem is finding time to spend together.”



Who we are

The Ukraine Day Centre is a not-for-profit association opened on April 28th. It is an ecumenical initiative between Our Lady of Faith, Christ Church and the Scots Kirk. We support those fleeing Ukraine irrespective of language, race, faith or gender. The Centre's services are free.

Christmas cheer fundraiser

Around 160 children and teenagers attend the Centre. This Christmas we want to offer them a small gift worth about 5 CHF. Our overall target is 800 CHF. Please help with a small donation. Our bank details are at the bottom of this newsletter.

Dates for your Diary

26 Nov: Ukrainian Stand at the Christ Church bazaar.

18 Dec to 1st Jan inclusive: The Centre will be closed.

21 December: Christmas party for Ukrainian children in Ecublens.

Our Chefs: a sizzling team

Grilled shashlik, perushka (potato pasties) and honey cake brought a taste of Ukraine to the Scots Kirk bazaar. It was all thanks to Serhii Sierhieiev, his mother Lyudmila Gordienko and the very capable team of Ukrainian chefs keen to prepare food that reminds them of home. Alyona, Oksana, Marina, Vyacheslav, Iryna, Olena, Galina and Lyudmila all come from different parts of Ukraine and met at the Ukraine Day Centre. Lyudmila says they all want to do their bit and contribute. "After cooking together for several events we are a friendly team," says Lyudmila. For the bazaar Serhii was on the barbeque turning out skewers of meltingly delicious chicken and pork. Mother and son (pictured) are both lynchpins of the Centre's organisation. « The Centre has become a small home for us, » says Lyudmila.



Defining the future

A working party is to be set up to discuss additional services for the Centre, following a volunteers' meeting on Sunday. The discussion concerned whether the Centre should provide "paid for" services to the wider community, on top of providing emergency support and a safe space for Ukrainians. Up to 20 volunteers heard from Centre Manager, Jeremy McTeague, Dmitry Milashchuk, Ukraine Reborn director, and Ukrainian Community coordinator Ludmila Bahmut. "We need to work, to take care of ourselves and to stop having to rely on benefits" stated volunteer Vladimir Soroka. "The Centre can provide a framework for us to do this." Many volunteers present felt the Centre should stick with its commitment to volunteers and funders and to its founding purpose to assist those most in need, particularly given the prospect of a fresh influx of refugees this winter. It was agreed that the Centre would continue as usual for the foreseeable future and that the working group would explore the feasibility of offering additional services.



Cut to the chat

A trained construction engineer, but Kataryna Lysenko (pictured here and on page one) is at the Centre most Sundays, where she is happiest cutting hair : 'It's not just a haircut, it's about starting a conversation. We discuss news, life here, sometimes it's very personal. It can be a release for people. If I can help, I do.' Kataryna started hairdressing in Ukraine when her son was small. She arrived in Switzerland in March with her daughter Biata, 18, and her son Makar, 11. Makar is at school, and Biata, a volunteer on the Centre's reception, is studying marketing in Geneva. They left their home, 50km from Kyiv, when the Russians arrived. Then the electricity station nearby was bombed and the family spent 3 terrifying days in a basement sheltering. Kataryna's husband is still in Ukraine.

How can you help ?

We especially welcome volunteers and really appreciate donations of winter clothes, money and food.

Donate

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