

# Momentum

March 2023

## February 24th remembered



(Above) Anna Maria, daughter of one of our regular volunteers, Oleksandr, sings to a packed hall. Exactly a year after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24th 2022, the Centre was the stage for an evening of music and singing to commemorate this sombre moment. Below, a quartet of our youngest musicians.



## Annual General Meeting

The Centre held its first AGM on March 5th. Two financial examiners were elected, amendments to the statutes, the 2022 accounts, a budget of CHF 6,894 and the Centre's strategy for 2023 were all unanimously approved by the members. Members were also told that more than 3,700 visits had been made to the Centre. That number has now risen to 4,000. Nearly 700 adults have registered at the Centre, plus their children, which represents more than 10% of the total number of Ukrainians refugees in Vaud.

## One year on: heading home

'Why, why?' asks Halina Mykolenko with tears in her eyes. 'It is such a senseless war'. She has been here a year yet despite the danger and uncertainty, she and her husband have made the difficult decision to return to Ukraine in a few days. Her daughter, who brought them to Lausanne, does not want them to go but Halina, a regular at the Ukraine Day Centre, believes the war will continue for years; for her, the war began nine years ago in Crimea and Donbas. The couple fled Kyiv last March after sheltering in the metro for three days as Russian troops advanced on nearby Bucha, the scene of one of the worst civilian massacres of the war. Halina and her husband, Ivan, who is 71, felt their home shake from the fighting 30km away. They travelled six days through six countries before reaching Switzerland.



### Halina Mykolenko - plans to help wounded soldiers

Halina says she has no idea what she will find when she returns home but she has to go. Her block of flats is still standing; she has seen it on Google. It is empty but power has been restored. 'I don't know if there is a front door or even any windows', she says. They also have a small country house 40 minutes from Kyiv. She shows pictures of the garden, the trees wrapped in blossom, the promise of future fruit. The 66-year-old microbiologist, whose career was in big pharma' worries about her husband's poor health. She intends to continue her work as a volunteer in a city hospital when she gets back, this time supporting wounded soldiers. Her daughter has a good job in Lausanne and will stay. 'It will be very difficult. Our daughter is our only child and we don't want to leave her. It is safer for her here but we belong in Ukraine'. Halina is grateful to Switzerland but wishes it would supply military as well as humanitarian support. 'The war will continue for years', she says. She does not know anyone else who has gone back. Anecdotally, few Ukrainians have left Switzerland. 'Switzerland is beautiful but for us Ukraine is best'. Her voice catches with emotion. 'We are old. Our wish is to end our days in Ukraine'.

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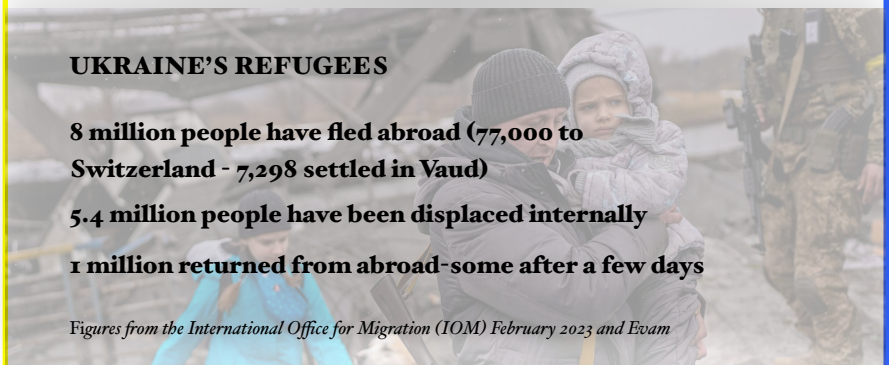
## UKRAINE'S REFUGEES

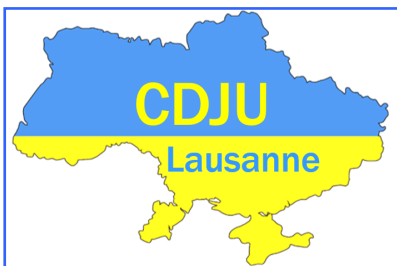
**8 million people have fled abroad (77,000 to Switzerland - 7,298 settled in Vaud)**

**5.4 million people have been displaced internally**

**1 million returned from abroad - some after a few days**

*Figures from the International Office for Migration (IOM) February 2023 and Evam*





### 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.

### Mi paroles Espérantos

Our resident music producer Volodymyr Soroka (below) has launched a series of Esperanto lessons for Ukrainians as a stepping stone to learning French. A teacher of forty years standing, he developed his teaching method using music. 'I take well known pop songs and adapt them into Esperanto, which, with its very simple grammar allows people to master the language in an incredibly short time'.



### Dates for your diary

**April 6th:** Thursday the Centre will open but there will be no English class.

**April 9th:** Easter Sunday the Centre will be closed.

**April 23rd:** One year anniversary celebration of the Ukraine Day Centre opening.

**April 16th:** Orthodox Easter Sunday, the Centre will open as usual.

### How can you help ?

We welcome volunteers and monetary donations. Sadly, we are unable to take any more clothing until further notice, due to limited space.

### Donate

Centre de jour ukrainien  
Ave de Ruminé 26, 1005 Lausanne  
IBAN: CH11 0076 7000 C555 4695 4

### Editorial Team

Heather Lima and Jeremy McTeague

## Meet the volunteers

**Kathy Overlack.** I have been volunteering at the Ukraine Centre since the first day we opened the doors. You can usually find me in the basement in the clothes bank. It has been a challenge to be able to offer a good selection of clothes for our Ukrainian friends in need, with a very limited amount of space here. It has only been possible with good organization and dedicated volunteers that help accept donations, sort through all the clothes, get rid of things that are not needed and provide the service to find clothes that are the right 'fit' for our visitors. I believe that clothing can be a powerful tool when it comes to transforming someone's mood and building self confidence, and that it can have a positive impact on our mental health. What brings me joy and fulfillment in volunteering is when someone tries on some clothes and they come out with a bounce in their step, and a beaming smile that I see reflected in the mirror. As an American having lived in various countries and having been exposed to a number of cultures, I really appreciate the cultural diversity the Ukrainians have brought to Lausanne.



**Rosemary Raedler.** As soon as the Christ Church office was told about setting up the Centre I agreed to represent our church community. I have spent a large part of my life listening and supporting people in difficulty, and was totally horrified by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I like the idea of being useful and helping innocent people in need. I also like seeing the 3 churches working together. I have been very surprised and touched by the resilience of our Ukrainian friends, and most impressed by the organisational skills shown by Jeremy (Centre coordinator McTeague) and others. I was brought up in Kenya but from age 14, I finished my schooling at the International School of Geneva. We took part in Refugee Day and in the Students' United Nations. All these activities helped me to understand, respect and work with people from other countries, cultures, religions. My parents were also closely involved in working for human rights and with refugees. I have two grown up sons, one very involved in politics, human rights and the protection of the environment.



