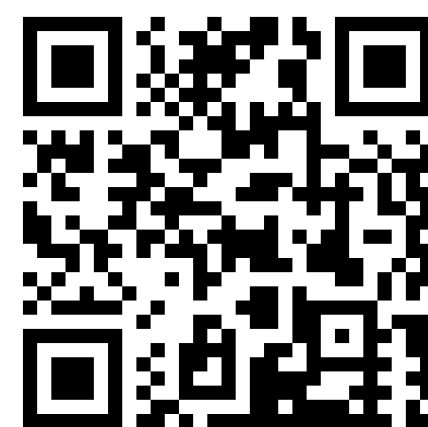


MOMENTUM



WE JUST HAD TO DO SOMETHING

THE CENTRE WAS BORN AMIDST THE SHOCK AT RUSSIA'S SUDDEN AND BRUTAL INVASION OF UKRAINE

It is a year since the Ukraine Day Centre opened its doors at the Scots Kirk. The aim was to provide emergency help and a safe place for Ukrainian refugees to meet. Just three people turned up the first day, but now you can hardly get in the door.

As millions of Ukrainian refugees were forced to flee Ukraine within weeks of the war starting in February 2022, the three English speaking Churches in Lausanne joined forces to work out a way to help.

« We just knew we had to do something, but what ? » said Scots Kirk Minister Gillean MacLean. Another Minister and friend in Hungary, who was already supporting refugees, advised that people would really need a place to gather, a place of safety, where they could share their stories. Co-founder and Centre coordinator, Jeremy McTeague, who had got the ball rolling early on, said: "The Scots Kirk had the space, and Our Lady of Faith and Christ Church were vital in providing volunteers, donations and other support. We just worried that no one would turn up." True, only three people came the first day, but the word soon spread. Soon there was anything from 70 to a 100 people every Sunday. "We had people turning up exhausted. They needed advice and reassurance in a foreign country, but mostly they needed to be able to talk to each other," said Jeremy. The evacuation trains were overcrowded so people could take very few personal belongings; the Centre's free clothing bank answered a very real need. Donations poured in from generous members of the church communities and the Oak Foundation, a philanthropic organisation headquartered in Geneva, gave a generous seed grant of CHF 5,000. With the cantonal refugee welfare organization, EVAM, stretched to the limit, the Centre also successfully provided French and English language lessons headed by highly experienced teachers who volunteered.



"We started working with the Ukraine Day Centre in June 2022...it has transformed into a vivid community with opportunities for support, growth, and healing."
-Ukraine Reborn

Formal recognition from EVAM followed and within months money came in from a number of communes. Crucial to the Centre's success was the support it received from Ukrainians already living in Lausanne who had rallied to help their fellow countrymen.

Ukraine Reborn, which organises psychological support and jobs orientation, was founded to help the waves of newcomers integrate, along with Morges-based association Together. Ukrainian volunteers who attend the Centre now assure its smooth running. Gillean says: "We have learnt so much from our Ukrainian friends! So much about love and acceptance and resilience that we find ourselves just so humbled. It has also been a gift to get to know the three Church communities better."

● THE CENTRE IN NUMBERS ●



700 UKRAINIAN MEMBERS



70 VOLUNTEERS



4,000 VISITS



5,000 CUPS OF TEA AND COFFEE



400 HOURS OF LANGUAGE LESSONS

WHEN THE DOORS OPENED ON APRIL 24TH, 2022

Exactly two months after the start of the war, the Centre opened its doors for the first time. Only three people came. Two of whom were Ludmila Bahmut and her daughter 16-year old Dasha who had fled Kyiv. Ludmila is now a key coordinator of our Ukraine volunteers team and she is the one making things work and helping our dynamic Ukrainian members along with Volodymyr Soroka and others. **"I love people, I love life, I love Ukraine. I am happy when I can be useful."**



"The Centre has become a space that Ukrainians can enjoy as though they are at home, as if they are with their family." - Ludmila Bahmut

"I feel the Centre has strengthened the bonds between the Churches. It is inspirational to behold what can be achieved by "team-work". We at Our Lady of Faith are proud to be involved in this project and are especially grateful to our ever discreet volunteers who have worked tirelessly for its success. We know who you are!" - Margaret Gaughan, Our Lady of Faith Church

CENTRE CO-FOUNDER JEREMY MCTEAGUE

Jeremy has been involved from the outset. He helped mobilise a small team to get the Centre up and running. He rarely misses a session and works hard behind the scenes to coordinate with the Scots Kirk, which has generously donated the space and without which few of the activities would exist.



"The war is unlikely to end anytime soon." says Jeremy "We all need to guard against compassion fatigue and complacency. This means continuously adapting the services we offer. Our focus now is on increasing employment assistance and language classes to facilitate integration into Swiss life."

"The Centre's capacity to help, its ability to react to the needs of our visitors and the creation of a wonderful safe family environment is due only to the dedication, hard work and care of our local and Ukrainian volunteers," - Jeremy McTeague

GOOD LUCK ZHANNA GUTOVA AND OUR YOUNG UKRAINIAN ARTISTS

One big success story coming out of the Centre has been the work of Zhanna and her team. This dedicated Ukrainian art teacher has organised creative activities for scores of children at the Centre twice a week. On Sundays, they also form a lively, enthusiastic and busy group. They have been at the heart of every major event organised at the Centre providing drawings and decorations, including greetings cards for the Christmas bazaars. Now Evam has decided to employ Zhanna to run courses for our talented Ukrainian children in a fully equipped art school.



UKRAINE COORDINATOR - VOLODYMYR SOROKA

Music producer and musician Volodymyr is often on reception or working on his computer in the corner. He has been a creative tour de force at the Centre organising many concerts and cultural events to mark special Ukraine days.





Visitors always feel very at home at Ave de Rumine 26 which is now so familiar to so many. The Centre is buzzing with life - Ukraine Reborn

OUR NEW WEBSITE

We will soon unveil our new website thanks to the efforts of one of our Pepperdine University volunteers. Sydney Bremer has now returned to her studies in Orange County, California, where she is studying film production and political science. 'Thank you for this opportunity to help create something to help this cause,' said Sydney who has kindly donated the set up fee for the website. We wish her the very best for the future. You can take a sneak preview of the site here.

ROSEMARY RAEDLER CENTRE CO-FOUNDER

"The thing that impresses me most is the ability and willingness of the refugees to take responsibility for running activities at the centre. We are extremely fortunate that a core team under the leadership of Ludmila Bahmut, grasped the importance of organising themselves, informing their compatriots about the Centre and advising us on the services most vital to new arrivals and to those who have been here for months alike."



DONOR ORGANISATIONS

Oak Foundation, the communes: Tour de Peilz, Ecublens, St Barthelémy, Daillens, Pully, Our Lady of Faith, Scots Kirk, Christ's Church, FEDEC-VD

DONATE

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