

# Momentum

Nov 23

## Starting afresh with USpring



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### Geri Bose

- "Iryna brings me joy...she is so upbeat, positive and enthusiastic"

**T**his week we meet Iryna Platon and Geri Bose who are paired up under the mentoring initiative USpring. The programme was set up by Dmytro Milashchuk and Herb Riband from Ukraine Reborn and the Centre de Jour Ukrainien, to give Ukrainians a helping hand as they settle into life in Switzerland.

'When I arrived in Switzerland, I had no idea what I would do,' says Iryna. 'I was devastated and lost. This journey started not as an adventure - it was an evacuation. My new path in Switzerland felt and sometimes still feels tough. My sister and I met Dmytro Milashchuk, also from Ukraine, and he told us about the USpring programme. This initiative was created specifically for Ukrainian people, which immediately made me feel safe. I could share my pain and thoughts, without pretending that they do not exist, and speak out about the war that Russia so brutally started. I am so lucky being paired with Geri Bose; we got on right away. I did not expect such a powerful and bright force from my wonderful mentor. We talked about life, laughed, and she asked me about my story, family, and country. I realised this collaboration would be more than just a pragmatic attempt at a job search.

Geri inspires me in a personal and professional way and I am so happy to learn from her. Every meeting we have is like a breath of fresh air and I feel more confident and courageous. I realised that all my struggles to understand where I belong and my personal doubts are just as natural as the pride in the small steps that I keep taking. Interestingly, my mentor-mentee program coincided with an internship that I was doing and no one was happier or more excited for me than Geri. She once told me "I think you're gonna be great wherever you go." I try to remember those words every time I get fearful or freeze, not knowing what to do. I consider it my privilege to have such a mentor who helps me grow not only professionally, but also spiritually. I am still searching for who I am as a professional, and it is invaluable that I am not alone. It is a perfect time to explore new things and the experience will bring me to where I am supposed to be.

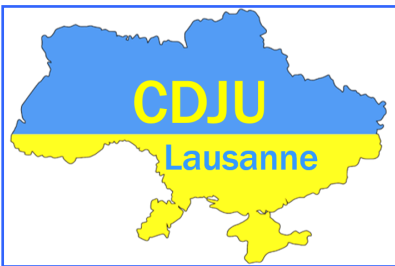
So, I would like to thank everyone involved in creating this program; it reminds me that life is full of amazing people - you should just be open to them. And thank you, dear Dmytro! Without you, it wouldn't have started. And thank you, dear Geri. I am enjoying every step of the way!

Geri Bose has several strings to her bow. Married with one daughter, she has turned her back on the corporate world of finance and set up her own business as a personal and spiritual development coach. She moved to Switzerland from California 20 years ago and is now offering to share her wide-ranging experience with the USpring community. She is mentor to Iryna Platon.

'I wanted to help and I enjoy coaching women, especially regarding their careers,' she says. Geri already provides guidance to women across nine different countries through her coaching, her regular podcast - 'Living Life in Awe' (available on Spotify and Apple) and her weekly newsletters.

Iryna's ambition is to work in digital marketing. 'Iryna brings me joy and hope for the future. She is so upbeat, positive and enthusiastic even during these difficult times. I am very impressed by her and what she has already accomplished,' adds Geri. She believes Iryna is well placed to find work. Geri is helping her develop her own digital projects to bolster her experience in digital marketing.

The mentoring programme allows mentors and mentees to meet up at their own convenience. Geri and Iryna have already met several times. 'The mentoring program gives our Ukrainian friends another perspective on how to approach living in Switzerland,' says Geri.



## Who we are

The Ukraine Day Centre is a not-for-profit association opened in April 2022. 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 bazaar

The Ukraine stall at the Scots Kirk bazaar- packed with goodies alongside the usual feast of marmalades,



## The Centre in numbers

We have had more than 12,000 visits, including children. New activities: dance, music and crafts, attracted 150 people on one Sunday alone.

## Dates for the diary

**16 & 17 Dec:** Centre children and adults' Christmas parties will be held at a local school.

**3 Dec:** The great clothing boutique free-for-all at the Scots Kirk.

**10, 17, 24, 28, 31 Dec:** Centre closed.

## How can you help?

We are seeking donations for Christmas gifts for Ukrainian Centre children. Also for funds to help two talented child athletes, a figure skater and a high diver.

## Viktoriiia: letting the soul sing

Children at the Centre are finding their voices thanks to training from a professional Ukrainian opera singer. They have already performed at several concerts. Alla Kyrda-Omelian, who attends the Centre, and whose daughter Sofiia, age five, sings with the choir, tells us more.

Viktoriiia Golosna from Dnipro in Eastern Ukraine, has an intriguing and appropriate surname. Her ancestor - a Zaporizhia Cossack - had the nickname "Golosnyi" which can mean "sounds strongly, clearly, audible, loud" or "becomes well-known." Viktoriiia has certainly lived up to the name in her own career. She is now encouraging the children in the youth choir, that she has started in Lausanne, to do the same. The choir, which includes children from the Centre, has already performed in Lausanne and Bern and with Yevhen Khmara, a virtuoso-pianist and Ukraine's 2020 composer of the year.

Viktoriiia dreamed of singing from childhood and went on to study at music college, and then university. She specialised in musicology becoming a lecturer and a researcher at the university, but always knew she wanted to sing professionally. She worked teaching at a music school, but also sang in the choir of the Dnipro Theatre of Opera and Ballet, and as a soloist at the Dnipro House of Organ and Chamber Music.

When the war intensified, the situation in Viktoriiia's home city became increasingly tense. Endless sirens and explosions were commonplace, accompanying the life of the inhabitants of Dnipro day and night. The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station by Russians in the summer of 2023 was the final straw. Viktoriiia fled to Switzerland with her daughter. Now they live in Lausanne with Viktoriiia's mother. Since she arrived, she has participated in many Ukrainian concerts, in particular for Independence Day in August, organised by the Centre together with other charitable foundations. She has a vast repertoire and performed the aria of Lauretta from Puccini's opera "Gianni Scicca" and a number of Ukrainian folk songs: "Oh, under the cherry", and "Ukraine is you" (Tina Karol). The children's choir was formed within the framework of the IvAlive association founded by Ukrainian TV presenter Ivanna Onufriichuk. Viktoriiia loves to share her knowledge with children, to inspire them, to look at their joyful faces, to 'see how the soul sings.' "I am a happy person because I am involved in the discovery of talent", says Viktoriiia. "Each of us has it!"



## Donate

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## Editorial Team

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