



# Momentum at Christmas

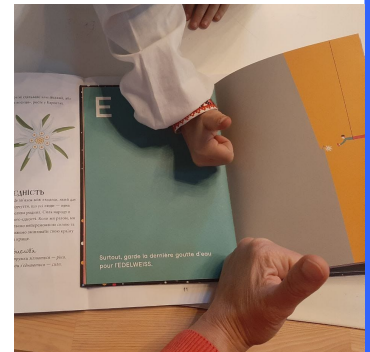
## Nataliia Rusanovska - a real tour de force at CDJU



Nataliia Rusanovska

**N**ataliia Rusanovska has enough energy and commitment for two people. A regular volunteer at the Centre de Jour Ukrainien, she has set up a reading group for young Ukrainians which is held twice a month. "So far Ukrainian children are not graded in school but they will be and will need to have the same level as their Swiss peers," she says. "To understand the educational material and increase your vocabulary you need to read a lot," she adds. Nataliia arrived in Switzerland in Spring 2022. By June she had found voluntary work through our sister association, Ukraine Reborn. She would accompany Ukrainians to appointments as a translator. A fluent English and French speaker, she had her work cut out at the start when people had so much need. Nonetheless, she also found time to run sessions of 'Go,' an ancient game of strategy believed to have been created 4,500 years ago. She also set up an online French reading course « Dialogues » using the social media platform, Telegram, a favourite tool for Ukrainians who could practise the conversations they would see on their phones. As most Ukrainians had no access to computers this was an ingenious use of their mobiles and users quickly ran into the hundreds. "I was so happy to be able to help other people learning a new alphabet, words and short phrases. Together we created 100 dialogues using the French course «Vite

et Bien» on Telegram and Skype. The dialogues are still available and now I am also sharing interesting news with the same chat group between our community back home and the Ukrainian diaspora. Nataliia was among the first Ukrainians, fleeing the war, to find full time work in the autumn of 2022. She works as a language support teacher in primary schools in Geneva for non-french speaking children. Nataliia, who has two older sons still in Ukraine, said one reason she left her country was she knew she could help children integrate into Swiss life. With two masters degrees in psychology and law, and her language skills, she could help as an interpreter, teacher and psychologist. "Until you understand the language it is like living in a fog so it is a gift when there is someone in a Swiss school to whom Ukrainian children can turn for translation, an explanation of school rules or of educational material."

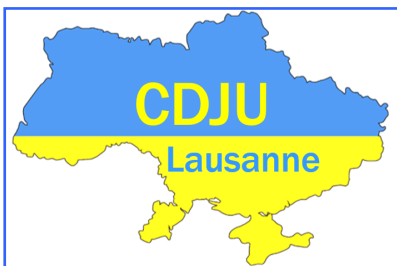


## Giving tomorrow's champions a helping hand

Promising young Ukrainian athletes of the future will be able to apply to a special fund the Centre has set up to help them finance their training and other related expenses. They need to find and pay for a coach, sports equipment and adapt to very different training regimes away from their native country. Thanks to a generous donation with this goal in mind, the Centre can help up to three potential champions. Any remaining funds will be used to meet regular expenses at the Centre de Jour Ukrainien. Applicants from the Centre would be required to apply before January 9th. They would need to supply testimony from a qualified third party, a coach or club, to support their application.



**Above:** Children from the Centre performing at a special Christmas concert with the choir led by Centre volunteer and Ukrainian opera singer Viktoriia Golosna.



### Who we are

The Ukraine Day Centre is a not-for-profit association opened on April 22nd. 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.

### Centre in numbers

We have had 12,000 visits since we opened 20 months ago in April 2022. We regularly receive up to 150 visitors on Sundays.



Christmas is coming early for Ukrainians this year after a special edict from the Ukrainian Government. It has decided to no longer follow the Julian calendar and consequently Ukrainians will celebrate Christmas on December 25th instead of January 7th. Centre coordinator Ludmila Bahmut said: "This is a return to the Gregorian calendar and means we will celebrate Christmas on the same time day as the Swiss."

### Dates for the diary

**Thursday 21 December 2023:** Centre is open for language classes

**22 December 2023 - 3 January 2024:** Centre closed for Christmas

**Thursday 4 January 2024:** Centre re opens

## Meet the volunteers

Mother of four, Orla Bogue (right), is a member of Our Lady of Faith Church and has volunteered at the Centre since the start.



"Like many volunteers, I watched with horror as events unfolded after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The images of women and children packed onto trains, leaving their homes and loved ones to seek safety were very troubling." Jeremy McTeague was one of the Centre founders and when he and the then Scots Kirk Minister, Gillian

MacLean, invited members from the three English speaking church communities to work together, Orla was ready to help. The initial plan was to set up vital support services for the Ukrainian refugees recently arrived in Lausanne. "Our principal and immediate aim was to provide a safe and welcoming venue where Ukrainians could meet up to socialise together and share information over a cup of coffee," said Orla. The centre has proven to be a vital and vibrant service for our Ukrainian friends. It has evolved to respond to meet new needs as they arise from providing clothing, and French and English language lessons, to mentoring and assistance with assimilating into life in Lausanne as well as becoming a hub for celebrating Ukrainian cultural events and holidays. Volunteers from the Ukrainian community have become very engaged in the running of the centre. "I have found being involved with the Centre very rewarding in the sense of being able to do something practical to assist in a time of crisis. I have met many truly inspiring Ukrainians and have really enjoyed learning about them, their lives and their country. I have also shared many happy moments with fellow volunteers from the other church communities whom I probably would not have otherwise met. Lasting friendships have been forged out of a collective endeavour to do good and bring hope to a dire situation."



**Oleksandr Halaiko**

Oleksandr Halaiko hails from Lviv. He has been coming to the Centre since he learned of its existence during the Independence Day march in August 2022. He is a father of three, whose daughter Anna-Mariia often sings at concerts and other events organised by the members. Oleksandr is the one who often oversees registration and locks up at the Centre on Sundays. He is also a technical whizz who often saves the day when things go wrong. And it is a family affair, his wife, Olha, also helps out at the Centre and bakes delicious cakes.

### How can you help ?

We especially welcome volunteers to help on Sundays and really appreciate donations

### Donate

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### Editorial Team

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