

Momentum

June 2023

The Centre in Numbers

Since May, 42 more people have registered at the Centre. 150 visitors attend each week. 6,000 visits have been made to the Centre since we opened in April 2022.



Farewell and Thankyou

Scots Kirk Minister, Gillean MacLean is retiring after four years in Switzerland. She and her husband, James, are heading back to Scotland. She worked through the covid pandemic and became President of the Ukrainian Day Centre when she helped start it. Centre coordinator, Jeremy McTeague, thanked her for 'creating such a good atmosphere of trust.' Gillean has overseen the Centre's evolution from an emergency reception to a lively meeting place. Ukraine coordinator, Ludmila Bahmut, presented Gillean with a Ukrainian flag. Vladimir Soroka on flute, and his pianist wife, Pavlina, serenaded them with 'Flower of Scotland.'

Мене звати...

Language teachers and local volunteers at the Centre became students for a morning to try to get to grips with the Ukraine language. Olena Cherenkova, who teaches Ukrainians at the Centre on Sundays, introduced the class to the Cyrillic alphabet and taught them how to greet each other in the language. 'I found it tough,' said one student. 'I wasn't expecting to read and write the first day, but I really enjoyed it.' Everyone involved appreciated just how difficult it must be for our Ukrainian friends to learn French and a new alphabet from scratch.

Kakhovka dam blast; Ukrainians at Centre appeal for support

'It is not just a disaster for Ukraine but for the whole world'

Ukrainians at the Centre de Jour Ukrainien in Lausanne have rallied to provide help for residents in the Kherson region after the collapse of the Kakhovka dam on the Dnipro River. The Russians have been accused of deliberately blowing it up to impede the Ukrainian counter offensive, causing a major humanitarian disaster with 11,000 people evacuated, 52 deaths so far and vital farmland that supplies food to all over the world, swept away or polluted. Water supplies and sewage treatment have been disrupted on the north and south banks, held respectively by Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine has accused UN aid agencies of being slow to react. Olena Bondarieva (pictured below), a general practitioner and paediatrician and a member of our Centre, knew it was essential to send medical products, clothing, bottled water and tins of food. 'It is not just a disaster for Ukraine but a disaster for the



whole world." When the waters disappear, the area will be barren with nothing to eat or drink and the risk of disease breaking out,' she says. Olena had moved to Kyiv from her hometown of Svatove in the Luhansk region six months before the war started. While Russian-backed forces laid claim to much of Luhansk region in 2014, Svatova was only occupied by Russians after the 2022 invasion. Olena's parents still live there in a house where the doors and windows have been blown out by explosions. Her own house has been seized as accommodation for Russian troops. Her daughter, however, escaped and is now living near Geneva. 'The Ukraine Day Centre has provided a safe place for us to meet which is so important for our mental well-being,' says Olena.

Anyone who wishes to donate seasonal clothing or non-perishable food can take them to the Ukrainian Restaurant in Ouchy, Le Semaphore. There are other depots listed on the organisation's website at HelpUA.ch.

'Please share this information as the situation remains desperate' says Olena.

New Automatic Registration System Launched



Our IT support volunteer, Karma Fussell, has devised an automatic sign-in process to speed up registration. It means the Centre reception team can scan new e-membership cards held on phones - but an email address is needed. If you have no email, please contact Ludmila Bahmut and we can help set one up for you.



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.

Cheering all the way



Sofia Lutsyshyn, aged 13, has won gold with her cheer leading team in the Spirit Academy Cheer and Dance competition held in Lyon, France in May. Sofia had become the Ukraine silver medal champion just before she and her family moved to Switzerland. She is now a member of the Angels Sunshine Cheer leaders in Renens.



Ukraine chefs run ravioli workshop

How can you help ?

We welcome volunteers and monetary donations. At present we are unable to take any more clothing donations.

Donate

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Editorial Team

Heather Lima and Jeremy McTeague

Meet the volunteers

Halyna Skyba left Kyiv after hiding in a school basement at the risk of being shelled. When she arrived in Switzerland, she was taken in by a family whom she says 'surrounded her with support and kindness.' A trained teacher, Halyna worked in recruitment in Ukraine; she loves working with people. She now runs a library for Ukrainian children and adults on Sundays at the Centre. She explains: 'As a volunteer librarian, my work is not only about issuing books, but also about talking to people, especially those who come to the Centre for the first time. I can also advise them on the many activities at the Centre, and who to turn to for help and advice.' She first worked with the Centre's Ukrainian team of chefs before setting up the library. 'This is a great place for Ukrainians to get support, share information and spend time together,' she says.



Salwa Rasconi arrived in Switzerland 54 years ago with her older sister and subsequently carved out a career here after marrying her Lausanne-born husband. She was born in the States in Ohio and also lived in Michigan, Beirut, Lebanon and West Africa. She started her schooling in Sierra Leone, where her father, who was Lebanese, had set up a medical practice. She then finished her education at the Swiss Châtelard boarding school in Les Avants. Salwa has two godchildren, one of whom is a singer and yoga teacher, the other is a French Swiss commando in the French army. She worked for Nestlé Nespresso before retiring and now helps out at the Centre preparing refreshments. 'I am happy to make an active contribution. It's such a warm, friendly atmosphere,' she says. She recently joined a beginners' class in Ukrainian organised for the volunteers at the Centre. Once a keen skier, windsurfer and sailing enthusiast she opts for calmer waters today preferring pilates, gym and swimming.

