

Momentum

June/July 2024

Centre Volunteers join Ukrainian Orphans in their Swiss Safe Haven

More than 30 Ukrainian orphans, now living in the canton de Vaud, have marked the second anniversary of their flight from their war-torn country. Guests, including volunteers from the Ukraine Centre, were invited to join them for an open day at their new home near



Above: members of the Ukraine Centre attending the communal lunch for the orphans. Right: under canvas to escape the rain and (below), one of the children disguised as an animal in the folk story of “Kolobok” - the runaway bread bun that is eventually caught by a fox. This famous Slavik tale resembles the western story of “The Gingerbread Man.”



La Sarraz. They were plucked to safety after their orphanages were destroyed during the Russian invasion in February 2022. Many are from Mariupol, the city that was subjected to a three-month siege by Russian forces. Despite driving rain, the day was full of smiles and joy. Huge tents prevented the weather spoiling the fun on Saturday, June 22nd at the Pompapes orphanage. Centre volunteers, Kathy Overlack and Sylvia Rubli from our Personal Support Team, as well as Centre President Louis Voiron, Ludmila Bahmut and Anna Khtema joined the fun and brought along some goodies for the children. Mariupol, was Ukraine’s tenth biggest city until it was destroyed. « It’s hard to imagine what these children have been through, but it was wonderful to see them enjoying a bit of normalcy after so much trauma in their lives, » said Kathy Overlack. The children all attend local schools but receive extra support from Ukrainian teachers. The project is a joint endeavour by the Swiss and Ukrainian Governments. The children already regularly attend craft activities on Sundays at the Ukraine Centre in the Scots Kirk, Lausanne. Many are organised by Centre volunteer, Nadiia Halushko, her husband Vadim, and Ludmila Bahmut. Louis Voiron said : « We hope we can continue to help these children to the best of our abilities. Making a small difference to their lives is a strong ‘raison d’être’ for the Centre. »



Another day of fun activities at the Centre with Nadiia, below

Craft paper and glue, material, string and threaded beads. Nadiia Halushko can use anything to make something magical with the children attending the Ukraine Centre on Sundays. There is never a dull moment, thanks to Nadiia, her husband, Vadim, and the other volunteers.





UKRAINE CENTRE

Who we are

The Ukraine 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.

Summer Opening Times

The Centre is closing for the summer holidays. It will be shut from Thursday, 4th July until Thursday, 15th August. Only those participating in the August 24th Independence Day celebrations will be invited for a number of pre-arranged rehearsals organised by Volodymyr Soroka. When we reopen, we will be across four sites described below.

One Centre - Four Sites

Our members will be able to enjoy their language courses and other activities in more spacious accommodation in future. We are upgrading from a one-centre site to four in an effort to ensure better working conditions. All three founding Churches are now making rooms available to ease overcrowding at the Scots Kirk. We now have premises at Our Lady of Faith in Avenue de Béthusy, 54 on Thursday and Sunday afternoons ; Christ Church in Avenue de l'Eglise-Anglaise , 1, on Sunday afternoons, below Lausanne central railway station ; and All Saints, Vevey, in Avenue de la Prairie, 40 on Thursday afternoons from September. Full details will follow. Your tutor will tell you of any room changes. To sign up new students should visit: language.learning@ukrainecentre.org

Ukrainians: Spreading the Word

Ukrainian volunteers at the Ukraine Centre in Lausanne were quick to realise that there was a real need for more Ukrainian books in Switzerland. Reading was going to prove a vital way for children to discover their cultural roots and keep their native country close to their hearts. Alla Kyrda-Omelian describes this growing literary force in Switzerland and across the world.

For more than two million young Ukrainians displaced globally by the war, access to reading in their own tongue rapidly became an important consideration. Halnya Skyba has headed the small, improvised lending library at the Scot's Kirk since tens of thousands of refugees were forced to flee their country after the 2022 invasion. Halnya (pictured right) was unwittingly part of a much broader initiative by libraries across the world to include every category of Ukrainian writing on their shelves as a gateway to Ukrainian literature and history. Children's books, from fiction to textbooks, were included to help youngsters connect to their distant homeland. Now NGOs, charities, volunteer centres and publishing houses have launched a number of projects to advance the dissemination of our culture. As well as the small library at the Ukraine Centre, there is the large Globlivres in Renens, near Lausanne, which offers 35,000 books in 300 languages. Recently, thanks to the efforts of concerned donors, their Ukrainian shelves have also



been replenished with exciting new literature. Currently, you can find works of Ukrainian classics: fairy tales by Ivan Franko, memories of childhood in his native Chernihiv region by Oleksandr Dovzhenko, humorous stories by Valentyn Chemeris, and fairy tales by Vsevolod Nestayko. Next to them there are fascinating stories full of unexpected pranks and adventures, dangerous journeys to ancient times or the virtual world, by a whole cohort of contemporary children's writers and poets: Kateryna Babkina, Halyna Vdovychenko, Yuriy Vynnychuk, Serhii Hrydin, to name but a few. There are also world-famous authors translated into Ukrainian: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Lewis Carroll, J.K. Rowling, Maria Konopnytska, and Vytautas Landsbergis etc. The Ukrainian shelves include the Great Kindergarten Reading Book and the Ukrainian Diaspora Literature Book, which contains works that raise themes of preserving faith and national memory, as well as collections of Ukrainian proverbs and poems. The fabulous tale by Ivan Malkovych, "Anna Yaroslavna: Kyiv Princess - Queen of France" is a beautifully illustrated story about the family of Yaroslav the Wise. Prominent historical Ukrainian figures are brought to life for the young reader. Many of Yaroslav's daughters married Europe's most celebrated royals: Agatha's descendants included many English and Scottish kings, and of course the youngest Anna, who as the wife of Henry I became Queen of France and whose lineage extended to almost all French kings and many European monarchs. Among the mother-tongue books about Ukraine today the fairy tale, "Dream," by contemporary Ukrainian writer Zoryana Zhyvka holds a special place. We are instantly plunged into a whirlpool of incredible adventures featuring the Kyiv-built plane Mriya, the world's largest-ever cargo aircraft. It had the codename Kozak and was listed in the Guinness Book of Records. It was tragically lost during the battle for Gostomel Airport in February 2022. The author grew up listening to stories by her family members who created Mriya, which translates as Dream. She weaves an enchanting morality tale that delves into her own imagination but is based on her intimate knowledge of this extraordinary aircraft.

Donate

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