

BEACON *of* HOPE

Mennonite Family Centre – Ukraine



by Louie Sawatzky
Project Director

In September I was again privileged to travel to Ukraine, for the annual visit to the Mennonite Family Centre. As a charity working in International Ministries, we are required to control all funds spent outside of the country.

The harvest in Ukraine, in spite of the hot, dry summer, was mostly complete, and again farmers were surprised at the size of the crop. Fields looked very well taken care of and at the time of my visit winter wheat crops were being seeded, and many fields showed signs of green.

The war in eastern Ukraine continues but has not moved beyond the front lines for the past year. The economy does show signs of growth. Roads are being repaired, new construction is evident in some areas, and unemployment is way down. It is estimated over 10 million Ukrainians are working outside of the country. When President Poroshenko was elected shortly after the Political upset in 2014, expectations were very high. The next Presidential election is in March 2019. We are not involved in the politics of the war or the country, and yet we are affected by it. Although generally people have become used to the uncertainties of war in their country, there is political uncertainty in the air.

Inflation continues, with the Hryvnia hovering at about 28:1 to one US dollar. All prices have increased dramatically. Minimum wages have more than doubled, and are slated to increase again in January, in an effort to keep up with inflation. Pensions for seniors have gone up marginally, so those with fixed incomes struggle. Our home care workers are also finding some other higher paying work, and for the first time, we are beginning to have worker turnover, and need to find and train new workers.



Programs of the Mennonite Family Centre

The Home Care program continues to be the main program. But clients all have different levels of need, so an assessment is done when they apply for help from the Centre. Our staff assess the level of need and a Care Provider is assigned for specific hours of care every week. Here are just two short samples of the 140 clients in the Home Care program. In spite of all their individual hardships, we are always impressed with their attitude of appreciation and gratitude. There can be joy even in the dark hours.

This is a picture of Tamara, 77 years old and a recent client, with her assigned care provider. Tamara lives in a small apartment and for the most part, can look after herself. She is hard of hearing, almost blind and has trouble walking, but with a little help she is able to stay where she has lived for 40 years. There is no other place to go, and she fears the future. Svetlana, her care provider, buys groceries, washes clothes and helps Tamara with cleaning.

The Day Program and the Respite Program also continue, as does our support for the many children with special needs. We hear the expressions of gratitude from so many clients, who thank all of you who make these programs possible, and express their gratitude to God, who is answering their prayers.

Tatiana (in the bed) is 63 years old. When her husband died, she moved into the city to be closer to her mother. Then she suffered a stroke, became partially paralyzed and could no longer get out of bed. So, her mother, at age 86 looks after her as best she can. Mom is now old and needs help herself. What can she do? Tatiana is now one of our clients, and Marina, the care provider, comes twice a week to buy groceries and help with food preparation, she helps with bathing, and laundry. With this help, they can get by for now.



The support for children with special needs is an example of very real success. There are now 104 children enrolled in the “Prometheus” program, with 32 children attending special school classes and there is a waiting list of children waiting to get into the program. This school, run in a former public school building, has a leadership team made up of parents and professionals. The team is dreaming of a separate space where the older children who will never qualify for public school can learn a trade in order to live productive and meaningful lives as adults. Many of these children are very gifted in special ways.

Hopefully this special program can grow to be totally self-sufficient.

Support for the Ukraine Ministry

We, in North America are truly blessed. Generally we have the support systems we can rely on in times of need. Hopefully, Ukraine as a country can also develop further to reach that point. The aim of our ministry is to enable local people to develop programs that address the many needs within their society. We have chosen to focus on the needs of seniors and children. This support changes attitudes and empowers the people who care, to take initiative to work out solutions appropriate for their culture and within their means. We invite you to be part of this ministry to Ukraine in memory of your parents, grandparents or even great grandparents who were able to leave that country in their own time of need, while many people who were unable to leave, endured much. **If you have made a recent donation, we thank you for that. We invite you to continue ongoing support.**

On behalf of the Board of the Mennonite Benevolent Society, and also the Board of the Mennonite Family Centre in Ukraine, we thank you most sincerely for the financial support, and your prayers, and wish you joy and special blessings as we again celebrate the season of Christmas.



(Cut and submit, or simply send your cheque in the envelope enclosed)

Yes, I want to help the needy in Ukraine! Use where most needed.

Name: _____ Amount: \$ _____

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Please note: Donations from the US are administered in Winnipeg, Canada. Receipts are issued by the Mennonite Family Centre (USA) Inc.

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Ukraine Ministry
1045 Concordia Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R2K 3S7
Registered charity # 119244952 RR0001

In the USA, make checks payable and send to:
The Mennonite Family Centre (USA) Inc.
Ukraine Ministry
1045 Concordia Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R2K 3S7
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