

“Florence Centre”

Family Service and Community Education



Annual Report

2022

Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine



Scan Me

Foreword



Lucy Romanenkova

The year 2022 turned out to be dramatic both for the country of Ukraine and its population, and for us, the small regional public organization “Florence Centre”. People began to leave en masse from many regions of southeastern Ukraine, including from the Zaporizhzhya region. Because Russian troops captured this part of Ukraine. Shelling, dead and wounded people, destroyed houses and critical objects, endless explosions and sirens.

Therefore, we could not even imagine that under such conditions the work of the Florence Centre is possible. But the past year has shown extraordinary endurance, creativity and a desire of our specialists not only to survive, but to help others. Therefore, this annual report is a unique document of perseverance, professionalism and love for people. Despite their own hardships and suffering, the employees of the Florence Centre continued to work.

Established in 2004, our organization has implemented up to ten different programs and projects every year. This is work with various categories of the population: children with special needs and parents, schoolchildren and teachers, students, families, the elderly.

This year we continued to work with children with various mental and physical disabilities; work continued with schools in the context of school mediation, with adolescents and teachers - training on how to survive in a war; with the military - how to survive after you have received a disability, with the elderly - material assistance. Psychological support for the entire population. New computer technologies make it possible to reach a large number of people. And, despite the military conditions - we had hundreds of clients throughout Ukraine, as well as in other countries.

A new project “Florence Centre International” is a wonderful opportunity to help displaced Ukrainian families in different parts of the world. We provided services in Canada, Germany, Austria, Estonia, Poland.

In the context of the project “Florence Center International”, Florence initiates a daily musing to provide Canadians with information about the war in Ukraine. She the words of eyewitnesses who are now in the country or have contact with the people of Ukraine, provides with very important sites about the events taking place. Today there are more than 200 subscribers. Many people simply start their day with a cup of coffee and the musing. We are trying to do everything possible so that people do not forget that somewhere there is an unjustified war.

We are Ukrainians, strong-willed people and we are looking forward to victory!!!

God bless Ukraine!

CEO of the Florence Centre

Lucy Romanenkova

The Project "School Mediation"



Olena Dulova

The Project was supported by the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine. Winter 2022 was the final stage of the project.. We were not able to accomplish everything because the war started. But still, some very important aims were achieved. We have developed School Mediation Centres in several schools in Zaporizhzhya: school #100, school "Vash Vybir", school № 67, and school "Sich Collegium".

In school № 100 school for third-graders, the school mediation centre conducted a presentation "The world of polite words", for fifth-graders - "Friendship is a world of vivid impressions." There also were 7 consultative meetings in junior classes. The events were attended by 124 boys and 107 girls. A total of 231 students.

To the International Day "Thank you!" Mediators of school "Vash Vybir" held an action "Thank you for...". Such a wonderful initiative has helped many to express gratitude and receive a lot of positive emotions. The mediators also made presentations to students on topics "We choose friendship" and "Resolve conflicts peacefully" for 50 girls and 30 boys. In total, the sessions was attended by 558 boys and 475 girls.

In school № 67 within the project "School Mediation" a training for teachers "Non-violent communication in teaching" was held. It was attended by 13 teachers (1 man and 12 women). Mediators try to keep the peace during the breaks, a have developed and distributed hand-outs on Bullying. Parents were informed about the activities of the school mediation centre. In addition, classes were held in 5th and 7th grades on the topic "Technique of safe communication" for 31 boys and 29 girls comprised 60 students.

In the school "Sich Collegium", mediators conducted an interactive game "Bullying VS Conflict" for students of grades 5-7th, during which children learned to distinguish between conflict and bullying and learned skills of nonviolent communication. Mediators held a debate with students of grades 8-10th with elements of the training "Is it possible to resolve the conflict by non-violent means?".

In January, when the city was hit by a wave of fake "mines" in educational settings, mediators developed a memo for their peers on how to behave in case of emergencies and do presentations. The mediators also created an Instagram page.

The event was attended by 173 boys and 190 girls, a total of 363 students.

It is important for the Florence Centre not only to create conflict resolution Centres but also to do it in a sustainable way. So, we traditionally create a common platform for coordinators to communicate. A workshop "Activities of the conflict resolution Centres in the context of education reform: experience, challenges and prospects" was held. The seminar was attended by almost all coordinators of schools centres developed with the help of our organization. Further collaboration was disrupted by the war.

The Project "School Mediation"

Yana Alyoshechkina, a teacher of 5B class:

"Children perceive information from their peers much more positively than from teachers, educators, and parents. Therefore, activities conducted by mediators are much more effective than educational activities conducted only by class teachers. For a long time after the end of the event, the children reflect and try to apply the acquired knowledge in practice".

Iryna Svyridenko, practical psychologist of the "Sich Collegium":

"The conflict resolution centre is our good helper. Children who are in the boarding school have the opportunity to come to come for the help of educators, even at a time when the working day of specialists of the social and pedagogical service is over".



Work with Foreign Specialists

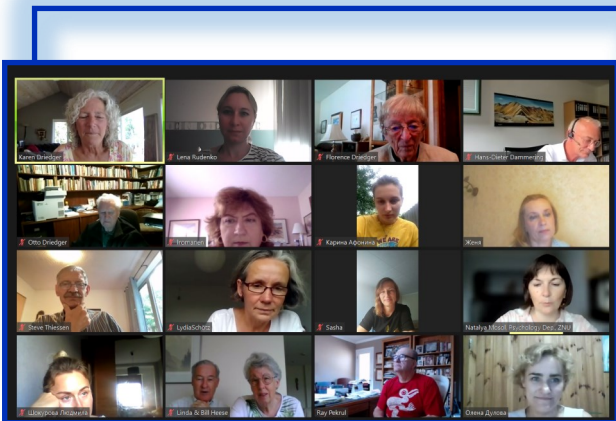


Lucy Romanenkova

Our main partners are Canadian Ukrainian Agrarian Development (CUAD), Florence Centre Support Group, and German Integrative Complex Kinderförderwerk, Magdeburg, Germany. Work with our Canadian partners was very intensive this year. We had 15 meetings on zoom and face-to-face meetings. We discussed the future of the organization, and the ways of functioning of the Florence Centre during wartime.

Three joint zoom meetings of the Florence Centre including the staff were held with Canadian partners. Our employees shared their feelings about what is happening during the war period in Ukraine. The meetings were very exciting, and almost all the participants cried from time to time.

Working with foreign experts also takes the form of daily communication with Florence and Otto Driedger, and almost weekly communication with the Board of Directors, especially with Karen Driedger and German colleagues. Issues of further interaction and current work are discussed. So far, the goals are short-term.



Training of Specialists



Olena Dulova



Olena Rudenko

In cooperation with National University, "Zaporizhzhya Polytechnic" and a plant "Motor Sich" psychologists from the Florence Centre had three conflict management sessions (10 hours) for the employees of the plant.

While working with the group, performing various tasks and discussions, our trainers noted that most of the workers are not ready to take responsibility for resolving the conflicts and wanted trainers to give ready-made solutions. Some participants showed a tendency to devalue the actions and identity of another person. Participants' responses sometimes included a lack of confidence in their own importance and significance.

Four training workshops were held on the program "Children and war. Healing techniques". The aim is to help teachers do self-care and support, help special people to stabilize their emotional state, to help children now and in the future. 14 people participated.

"Personally, for me, it was important to understand the causes of the conflict, to delve into the needs and interests of different sides of people. As we used to quarrel, talked about emotions and that's all.

"It would be nice if other workers would get the possibility to hear this information, as it would help to understand each other and our needs better.



Project “Florence Centre International”

The outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022 led to the fact that many organizations are closed. People tried to leave Ukraine as soon as possible. Among them were us, both employees of the Florence Centre and our clients. Once in other countries or in another territory of Ukraine, we began to look for ways to be useful to people. First of all, for Ukrainian migrants, adults, and children.

Thus, the idea of providing professional assistance to our citizens within the framework of the Florence Center International project arose. The geography of services turned out to be quite wide: Ukraine and foreign countries. In a number of regions, our employees have provided and continue to provide assistance to families and children with special needs (Ukraine, Germany, Austria, Poland), wounded soldiers in hospitals (Western Ukraine), and temporarily displaced persons (West Ukraine, Estonia and Canada).

Our specialists work as physical rehabilitation specialists, psychologists, social workers, consultants, speech therapists, and translators. Our staff found themselves in the status of refugees. Therefore, the burden on them is double, as a specialist and as displaced persons. That’s why the stress level is quite high. But by helping others, our staff members overcome their own difficult life situations.



Project "Florence Centre International"

Work with soldiers and community (West Ukraine)



Tetyana Vasylieva

In the western part of Ukraine Florence Center International project work with temporarily displaced persons, with the military in the hospital. Work with temporarily displaced persons in Western Ukraine consisted of informational, educational, and psychological support. Refugees from the southeastern regions lived in the sports halls of schools, where our colleagues conducted classes. These were lectures, and consultations on how to survive in such conditions, how to find the meaning of life, and how to help children in wartime. There were 50-60 people in every class. More than 40 individual consultations were done for the civilian population. Teachers of local schools also showed interest in such activities. They also need help and psychological support. Most residents of the western regions reacted positively to the migrants. Although there were indifferent and negative examples of attitudes towards people's troubles.

The experience of our colleague's interaction with the military, who are in the hospital in Western Ukraine (city Truskovets) has become unique. All soldiers are amputees. They stay in the hospital until they receive prostheses and can return home. More than 160 consultations were held with them.

The military at first, as well as the medical staff, did not understand the need and expediency of such consultations. Many do not want to notify their parents and wives that they have become disabled. There are cases when a wife divorces her husband. She doesn't need a disabled person. There was a case when the mother of a soldier arrived and was very sad that he was left without two arms. Her husband died, the wife of a soldier left him, and two grandchildren were left in her arms. Who is to feed the family?

Some of the soldiers met our specialist aggressively and refused to talk. When it was possible to establish the process of counseling, they began to eat, sleep, look at the world, and think about the prospects of life. All people, both migrants, and the military, experience post-traumatic syndrome. It is clear that in post-war times a lot needs to be done both to work with PTSD and to work with the community about accepting people with disabilities into society. Today, we see cases where children poke their fingers at people with prostheses. Some people give a smoke as a charity, some give money, and most people try not to look and turn away. Pity in the eyes of many.

Working with the community and with soldiers who will be back after the war are the directions that Florence Centre plans to take.



Project "Florence Centre International"

Management of Facebook of the Florence Centre (Estonia)



Olena Rudenko

A total of 29 of our own publications on various topics were made in 2022. In the posts, we talked about emotions, parenting, teachers, and different ways to help ourselves and others in critical situations.

The following publications received the largest number of reviews among readers:

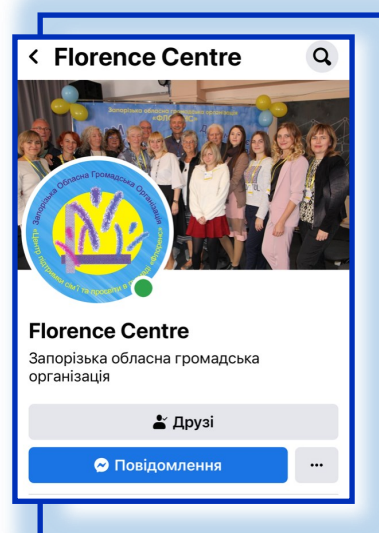
- How to learn to support people? (like – 170, sharing – 659);
- Emotional burnout of parents? (like – 120, sharing – 573);
- First of September without stress? (like – 106, sharing – 410);
- Do we take care of our mental health? (like – 68, sharing – 348);
- To the all-Ukrainian campaign "16 days against violence" (like - 90, sharing - 195).

From time to time we have seen people simply copy our information and put it on their pages. In this case, we cannot count for sure and say the exact number of distributions, because they are not displayed for us.

Also, this year, we launched two new sections: "Briefly about the important" (12 publications) and "Treasury of the Florence Centre Facebook" (5 publications). The section "Briefly about the important" differs from long posts in that there is minimal or no accompanying text. All information is provided through informational pictures. And in the "Treasury of the Florence Centre Facebook" section, we share those exercises that our experts used in their work and are effective for various audiences, even with minimal training of a facilitator.

The following publications received the largest number of reviews among readers:

- Infographics about self-help methods to reduce the level of anxiety and features of communication with victims (like -65, sharing -161);
- How to maintain mental balance? (like – 53, sharing – 137).



Project "Florence Centre International"

"Thank you, very useful and much-needed information!!! Such a state is not uncommon for adults, but nowadays it is hopeless..."

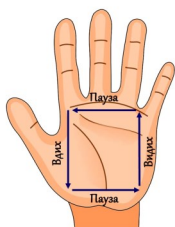
"Thanks for the info. It is very needed now, especially for moms who are abroad, alone without dads."

"Thanks for the useful tips, all the best! It is very useful for health, but we are often indifferent to it. Today there is emotional switching on and ungluing. Keep the balance! Today it is felt even from a distance..."

"Very interesting information. Thanks to the method, now I understand how important it is to express gratitude."

"Thanks for the explanation. You are in my thoughts and prayers every day. Some good advice here for emotional regulation at the moment. But there will be so much more that needs to be done."

Долаємо стрес



Вправа
«Дихання по квадрату»
Пальцем однієї руки водимо по долоні іншої, утворюючи квадрат. На вертикальних гранях уявного квадрату робимо вдих/видих, а на горизонтальних паузи. Вдих – пауза – видих – пауза.
Повторювати приблизно п'ять хвилин або поки не заспокоїться.
Таким чином повертається контроль дихання. Також це і тактильний відчуття – зосереджує на відчутті власного тіла.

Запорядкована обласна громадська організація «Філармонія»

Як навчитися підтримувати людей

Не заперечуйте почуття іншої людини



«Не все так погано, і взагалі ти в безпеці. Радій, що живий!»

«Люди досі в укриттях сидять, а деякі взагалі без житла лишилися»



«Мені дуже шкода, що так сталося»

«Те, що сталося з тобою дуже страшно»

«Ти маєш право на гнів та ненависть до ворогів»



Запорядкована обласна громадська організація «Філармонія»

Профілактика стресу

Вправа «Чую, Бачу, Відчуваю» (керування увагою)



Сядьте зручно. Підніміть наочі себе. Зосередьтесь лише на тому, що ви БачИТЕ. Не відволікайтесь на думки на кшталт «Навіщо я це роблю», «О, забула попити кави», «Які надворі кричать» тощо. Просто механічно фіксуйте все, що ви бачите (шафа, вікно, квітка, телефон...)
Закрийте очі. Зосередьтесь на тому, що ви зараз ЧУЄТЕ. Намагайтесь почувати все, що можливо.
Зосередьтесь на своїх ВІДЧУТТЯХ. На чому ви сидите? Яка на дотик поверхня?
Цю вправу можна виконувати де завгодно. Починайте фіксуватися на тому, що відбувається навколо. Піддайте все, що сприймається нашими органами почуттів. Мета - прирости свою увагу до свідомого контролю. Згодом це вміння можна буде застосовувати, щоб швидко переключитися з негативних емоцій і переключено на щось інше.

Запорядкована обласна громадська організація «Філармонія»

Project "Florence Centre International"

Work with disable children (Poland)



*Liudmyla
Shokurova*

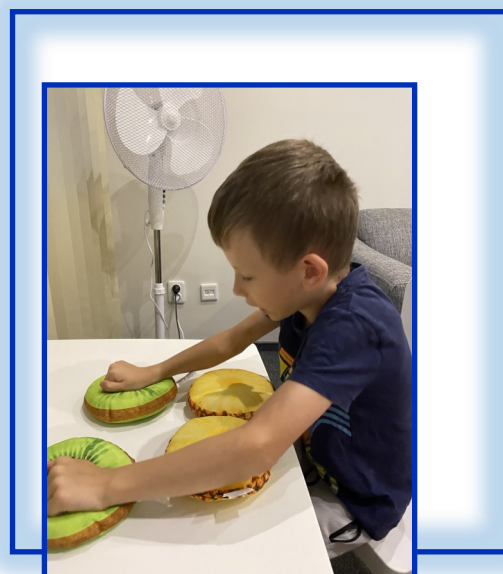
The new Project "Florence Centre International" in Bialystok (Poland) has been operating since May 2022. In the project, we provide assistance to Ukrainian families who have children with developmental disabilities and who were forced to leave Ukraine due to the war. Thanks to the project, children with special educational needs have continuous developmental correction with a Ukrainian specialist while abroad.

During the existence of the project, 9 children with different nosologies and from different cities of Ukraine - Kyiv, Kharkov, Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Nikolaev, Mariupol took part in it.

Conducted about 350 remedial classes.

We can note such results for the past year: two boys started talking! Children have the opportunity to fully attend preschool institutions in Poland, because with the advent of speech, their behavior has improved significantly, and mothers were able to go to work. The girl N. managed to level off in speech development by the beginning of the school year and successfully masters school skills, has got good grades. The boy N. with autism from Mariupol also successfully went to the first grade in Poland. Our remedial classes contribute to the integration of Ukrainian children into Polish society, because it is much more difficult for a child with severe speech disorders to perceive information in a foreign language and, moreover, to speak it.

The parents of the children express their gratitude to the organizers of the project!



The “Kangaroo” Program



*Oleksandra
Ivashko*



Karina Afonina

The «Kangaroo» Program (part of the Florence Centre) operates in our house in Zaporizhzhya, which was given to us by the Mennonite Church. The number of children varied throughout the year. At the beginning of winter, there were up to 15 children who came to both group and individual sessions. But in March, families began to go abroad (Poland, Romania, Germany), or moved to Western Ukraine, away from the war zone.

Due to the military situation, because of the shelling and bombing, it was impossible for families come safely to our Center. At times, it was scary for children to go out into the streets when they heard sirens. And we began to conduct classes and consultations online. The specialists of the Kangaroo Program prepared classes for children, put them on our Facebook and in a Viber group for parents. We explained to parents how to use the materials with children. But our children do not perceive our employees on the screen. They leave the computer, crying that there are no classes at the Florence Centre. Therefore, the main focus was on parents. Some of the parents did this work, some did not.

In addition, the “Kangaroo” Program provide information, methods of work, recommendations on our official website of the Florence Centre in the Kangaroo Program section for all interested people. Thus, other families can use this information. For example, our colleague made a video recording of a Yoga class for children, which was watched by 122 people.

It wasn't until April that the Kangaroo program was able to have face-to-face sessions with children. Due to the rules of the children's centres, we cannot have the children stay all day. This requires a bomb shelter, which we do not have. And there is no way to do it in our house either. Therefore, we decided that the children will stay at the Centre for only 3-4 hours, provided the parents are waiting for them at our Centre. In the case of an alarm, bombing, parents can take their children and hide in a bomb shelter, which is located in the nearest school.

The number of children who constantly visit our Centre now is 7-15 people. Some of them are our former participants, some are children from temporarily displaced families. For those families, we provide free services. However, one family decided that they would pay for the services of professionals. We are glad, for us this is an indicator of the value of providing services.

Classes with children are teaching self-care skills (children do not eat on their own, do not get dressed, waiting to be taken to the toilet), socialization (a lot of autistic people are very much isolated at homes). Sessions in the Centre are held to strengthen their physical health, to educate them, to do massage. Specialists evoke speech, teach children the seasons, colors, shapes, etc. A lot of work is done on the development of fine and gross motor skills. That is, this is not just a stay of children for some time at the Centre, this is a huge systematic work on the development of each child.

The "Kangaroo" Program

Employees during the organization of work online were able to attend many seminars, lectures on working with children with special needs. These topics are "Psychological Assistance in a Crises Situation", "Special Child and War", "Fundamentals of ABA-therapy in working with children with special needs", "Sleep Disturbance and Physical therapy". The Florence Centre pays for the Master's degree education of one of our staff members.

In the spring, our German partners decided to provide financial support for three months to 15 families bringing up children with special needs. Through our organization, both children who currently attend our Center and former kids received help. We had families who refused to receive financial assistance so that those more needy families could receive this assistance. Thanks to our German partners!

This year, we have changed employees in the Kangaroo program for different reasons. For some of them it is far to go to work, to whom it is simply stressful to work with such children. 10 people came to work. Stayed with children from one hour to two days. But we continue to look for employee's stress-resistant and for those who love children. The local city program for seniors gave us 50 pairs of socks. We gladly accepted this gift. Now we have warm socks for both children and adults.

Mother R.: - "We really want to go to the kindergarten. R. boring without children and educators. We miss you. "

D.'s mother says: - "In Romania, a day group was organized for Ukrainian children, but D. misses our kindergarten very much and often asks about his friends."

One parent told me: «When at night the sky is very bright and people could feel vibrations and explosions my child asked me: "Mom, are tanks coming?"

S.'s mother said: - "Everything is fine, but we miss you".



The Project "I am Beautiful!"

The project "I am beautiful" received a new meaning for the period of war. Ten single low-income people received one-time financial assistance. Some people began to kiss the hands of volunteers out of gratitude, some feared that it was a scam and would be forced to return much more. Most people were happy with the unexpected help and without the bureaucracy of paperwork.



Counseling

It is difficult to say how many consultations we as a staff provided for people in different projects and programs. We consulted parents of disabled children on issues of how to organize a life of a child in wartime and to survive by themselves. We also did lots of consultations for displaced people in Ukraine and abroad. We help people with consultations on emotional states, and informational and educational support in Estonia, Germany, Austria, and Canada. Some of our specialists stay there for a while waiting to be back in Ukraine.

More than 50 consultations were carried out for children and adults by phone. Topics of the referrals: emotional lability, experience of traumatic episodes, adaptation to new realities, cohesiveness in coexistence with parents. Other topics address: anxiety, depression, loss of meaning in life, traumatic events, etc. All consultations, directly or indirectly, related to the war topics.



We provided a lecture to students of the Zaporizhzhya National University specialty “Social work”: “Social services in Canada. Their role in the integration of refugees in the country”. Students are very much interested in the international experience in developing services for people. A lecture to students of Zaporizhzhya National University specialty "Psychology" "Love in old age". Work in the expert group of the College of Economics and Law to improve the program for social workers at the bachelor's level

Otto Driedger and Lucy Romanenkova were key speakers at the conference of the Zaporizhzhya Regional Institute of Postgraduate Education “Partners and participants in the educational process - the key to success in creating a safe educational space of the New Ukrainian School”. More than 160 people participants in this on-line conference.

We participated in the discussions and were key speakers at Forum "Let's fight with violence together" as part of the campaign "16 days against violence" Organizers of the event: Center for Gender Education in Colleague of Economics, Zaporizhzhya.

“We are so much excited about the presentations of these two Professors!!! Where did you get them?” - “They are my friends and colleagues” - “We just envy you “. - “I envy myself”

“These speakers are just pearls!”



War in Poetry

It's hard to live without a home,
Far from native...
And believe that soon the enemies
Would be defeated.

It's hard to live without
What are you used to be every day.
The enemies have nothing sacred,
But we will not be overwhelmed by their lies.

It's hard to live without time,
Because it stopped for us.
But we will return everything at once
And peace will come everywhere at the same time!

April 28, 2022, Olena Rudenko

