



ukrainian education center

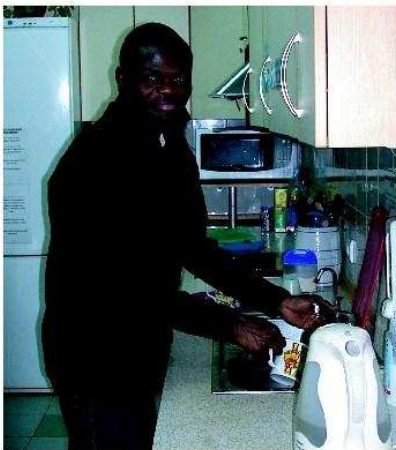
Issue 20

Fall 2007

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A Home Far Away From Home



Mike Agboola in the UEC kitchen

Lately the UEC staff witnessed several of our regular patrons share about how the Center helps them using almost exactly the same words. They say they feel at home at the UEC while being hundreds or even thousands of miles away from home. We would like tell you about two of these people, about how we got to know them, and how the UEC makes them feel at home.

Luda Ikonnikova is a younger sister of Ira, one of the UEC part-time desk workers. The sisters originally come

from a small city of Novodnistrovsk in western Ukraine. Ira is now a third-year student of the National Aviation University in Kyiv, and she is also a faithful member of Nivky Church. It has been Ira's dream to work in a library since she was in third grade, when during the breaks between classes she spent her time alphabetically organizing books in their little classroom library while the rest of the kids went out to play. Since she started working at the Ukrainian Education Center in September 2006, her family was constantly hearing about how wonderful it was to work at a library, but not just a regular one, but a library that goes much further than just shelves of books to meet the needs of its patrons. That is how Ira's younger sister Luda came to love the Center even before she moved to Kyiv to study.

Luda started her first semester of studies at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy this fall. Like it is for many other first-year students, this semester is a difficult time of changes and transitions for her. The first hardship of being an out-of-town student in Kyiv is

finding a place to live, since Ukrainian universities provide rooms in dormitories only to a small number of students. Since rent goes up every year, renting a room even with very poor living conditions can be incredibly expensive for a first-year student. That is what Luda had to face this semester. She had to move from one place to another three times before her university finally offered her a place at a dormitory. The girl has to also go through other challenges like adjusting to the university program, learning to live on her own, and planning her budget and time.

Needless to say these several months have been quite stressful for her. With so many challenges, she enjoys coming to the Ukrainian Education Center regularly. It is here that she can study in a quiet atmosphere or simply relax and have a cup of warm tea. Luda often reserves a room, checks out a CD player and a couple of Christian CDs to listen to good music. She also uses computers at the UEC to get ready for her classes. A special treat for her is to check out a DVD and watch a movie at the Center together with her sister Ira, just like they would at home.

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Our Mission

Promoting a living faith in Jesus Christ by meeting educational needs in Kyiv

A Home Far Away From Home

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Kayode Agboola, or simply Mike as he is known among the UEC patrons, is another first-year student in Kyiv. However he came to study here from a much more distant place than Luda. His home is Nigeria. Mike's dream is to become a medical doctor. He is now a first-year student at the National Medical University. As all the international first-year students in Ukrainian universities, Mike will spend this first year intensively studying Russian. Since he is only starting to understand a little bit of Russian, it is very important to him that he can speak to people in English at the Center, freely understand what others say and be understood. Since Mike comes from a Christian family, it is even more important to him that he can check out Christian books in English and Christian CDs and be encouraged and strengthened in his faith. It is also an encouragement for him to see that UEC workers try to minister to unbelievers. "You reach out to people. It's a good thing" - he says - "I feel like home here."

If you plan to make Christmas purchases at **Amazon.com**, please use the search engine on the UEC's website www.ueckyiv.org.

The UEC will receive a percentage of the purchase costs.



Fall Activities



Nivky Church small group meeting on a Wednesday night

152 new patrons registered this fall.

The majority of these new patrons are students of the International Christian University, Kyiv Polytechnic University, and Kyiv National Linguistic University.

As always fall is the time when the UEC welcomes new patrons. So far this fall 152 new patrons have registered at the library. 122 of them study at 27 different universities in Kyiv. Many of these students are first year students at the International Christian University who came to look for Bible reference materials. They all received a free Bible in English and, if their knowledge of English was not so good (needed to improve), a Bible in Russian or Ukrainian.

This fall the four rooms in the UEC facility are busy every night with various activities and group meetings. The event that attracts the highest number of people is the Movie Night, an outreach activity led by Nivky Church members every Friday. In our newsletter a year ago we reported that the Movie Night was started, and finances were donated by many church members toward the purchase of a video projector so that movies can be shown on a big screen. With the advance of technology and introduction of DVDs that offer a choice of languages a movie can be watched in, we were able to show movies in English with subtitles. With the help of these two special attractions - a big screen and the movie being shown in English, the event became very popular with a group of students from the International Christian University and some other universities in Kyiv.

Throughout last year, the movie night was a little bit transformed. Now, instead of just showing a movie, a discussion is offered right after the movie is over. During the discussion we ask questions that make students think about their life and values. We try to encourage them to share about their families and friends and to think about spiritual matters. Through these discussions, four girls already became good friends with some of the church members. Please pray that their faith will grow with the help of this friendship, and that we will develop close relationship with many others.

Among other activities, there are four Bible study groups that take place at the Center every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday night. A group of preachers from the Nivky Church meets on Tuesdays to discuss their sermons and study the Bible together. Four small groups from Nivky and Livoberezhna churches meet on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. An interesting development this semester is that several groups of students gather at the UEC every week to study English. Our library provides a wide variety of study materials and supplies for them.

It is a blessing for us to see that the UEC is able to serve all these groups, students, new patrons and those who already became our good friends.

The Beauty of God's Work

By Chris Lovingood

July 1, 2007, Lena and I left Kyiv. After eleven years of ministry in this gloriously perplexing city, it came time to say our farewell.

With all significant life changes, there come moments of quiet reflection and awareness, painful awareness at times. Painfully aware of failures and mistakes, of projects and tasks left undone, of relationships that distance will sever or mute. But in those same moments, there is an alarming beauty. When I first visited Kyiv in 1992, there wasn't much noticeable beauty. Rust, dilapidated buildings, peeling paint occupied the eye. For the aesthete, there was little to ponder.

God, though, showed me the beauty behind the crumbling post-Soviet facade. He had long been at work, bringing to life the beauty of faith that remained dormant or had for so long been suffocated. It was an honor to witness this true renaissance. To imagine that God would ever involve me and a band of supporters spread across Kyiv and the US in this long awaited renewal of true beauty--it remains one of his mysteries.

The UEC is a place of beauty. Not so much because we have a modern facility with numerous amenities, but because God does beautiful things within those walls at 30 Prospect Pobedy, apt. 82. With every checked out book, with every cup of tea, with every Bible given away, with every unbeliever served, God splashes his brilliant colors on life's canvas and makes something of beauty.

Like with all masterpieces, it does not happen quickly. Mass production normally can only bring kitsch. God uses the UEC to do something much

grander, much more lasting. He uses the UEC's growing library to nurture faith, to encourage the seeker, to equip evangelists and teachers in churches scattered across the city. Father uses the meeting rooms for all sorts of creatively diverse purposes--for building community, for meeting felt needs, for expanding the kingdom. The Lord continues to use the very capable staff, led by the gifted Vitaly and Lera, to love and encourage and serve the hundreds of patrons who visit each week. In ways we easily see and in ways hidden from us, God is making his masterpiece. What an honor it is that the UEC is a part of this master work.

We miss seeing God at work at the UEC and in the Kyiv churches. We are glad, though, that we can continue to serve as a liaison for the US board and will continue to encourage and bless the UEC in all the ways we are able. I am delighted that this dream came to life, grows, and now continues to expand though I am miles away.

Lena and I, as we adapt to life in Nashville, continue to see God hard at work. He is the most relentless of artists. I now see him at work among 96 Burundi refugees who were resettled to West Nashville this fall. As the interim director of a small non-profit aimed at assisting refugees and immigrants, we see his hand at work in an incredibly difficult circumstance. But thankfully, just as the Father taught us in Kyiv, we look beyond the immediate circumstances and look beneath, to see the beauty He is making.

Chris and Lena can be contacted at their email address ribki2@gmail.com



Thank You, Financial Donors

We thank these generous 2007 donors and any we may have overlooked.

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Celebrating the UEC's Sixth Anniversary

The UEC welcomed some guests from the USA this fall. David Ralston, UEC's board president, and six members of the Highland Street Church of Christ visited the Center at the end of October. Our guests brought two suitcases of new books for the library, spent an afternoon practicing English with students, led two seminars for UEC patrons, and joined our staff and patrons for the celebration of the Ukrainian Education Center sixth anniversary.

Many of the UEC patrons and their friends greatly enjoyed our guests' visit. Our American visitors were willing to spend some of their time at the UEC meeting Ukrainian students and helping them with their English. This provided, an opportunity to practice English with native speakers free of charge was announced among our patrons in advance. Such events are very popular among Ukrainian students and adults who want to learn English and even among those who already speak English well and want to keep up their language skills. Two of our American guests spent several hours getting to know university and secondary school students, some of our regular patrons and some of those we saw for the first time. These new people expressed a big interest in the library, and several came back later to register.

Two other Highland Street Church of Christ members prepared lectures on business ethics and building good relationships with people. The lectures were very well attended and were a great success too. The speakers gave useful perspectives on their subjects referring to them from a Christian point of view. We thank our speakers for taking time to prepare and having courage to speak to a foreign audience and hope that their words touched the hearts of unbelievers who attended these lectures.

The next day, October 19, UEC patrons, staff, and American guests all came together to celebrate the UEC's sixth anniversary. Dr. Gary Jerkins, a UEC board member, who happened to be on a medical mission trip to Kyiv, also joined us for the celebration. Our visitors from Memphis and some Ukrainian volunteers spent the whole afternoon to help prepare for the event. They had a wonderful time sharing about their lives, families, and secrets of cooking. Around 50 UEC patrons came to share in our celebration. Together we enjoyed refreshments, sang famous Christian songs in Russian, Ukrainian, and English, told stories about how the UEC was first founded, and watched a slide show with pictures of the Center and its daily visitors.



Students at the UEC anniversary

We also played a game that checked our patrons' knowledge of the UEC, and the winners received certificates that would be used for canceling penalty points and checking out more items in the library. Everybody who attended the celebration also received a small gift from the Center. This was the time to say thank you - to those who came to help that day, to the guests who tried their best to serve the needs of the Center and our patrons during their visit, to our patrons who fill our facilities every day and keep our library circulating, to volunteers who are there to help move the furniture or wash the windows, to our board of directors who make important decisions to keep the Center alive day after day.

And of course we would like to thank all of you for the years of support you've given us. Thank you for making the Ukrainian Education Center the place it is today.

**Please send all donations and
correspondence to:**

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