COVID-19 Special Issue
News from our Friends and Projects in Russia and Ukraine

More extensive versions of these stories, and others (and a first-ever FHM music video) are on our website: www.friendshousemoscow.org/coronavirus-special

Friends House Moscow may be uniquely placed to share the Russian response to pandemic isolation. Take a moment to step back from the political military posturing and threats; put the stereotypes of “them” on hold, and look for a few minutes at the humanity we all share. This situation brings an opportunity to look past labels and nationalities, and see what we have in common, as well as how different our responses and solutions might be given our culture, locale and individual calling. -- Julie Harlow

Big Change

FHM supports the English Club at Big Change, which gives education and life skills to orphanage graduates. The Club has gone online, with the students mastering two new games: “Guess Who?” and “Guess Where?” – they are shown a picture and have to guess what is hidden and where it is hidden. This is valuable language practice, and something fun to do for young people confined to home.

"Guess Who?" and "Guess Where?"

Katya, above (name changed at her request), works as a nurse in the largest hospital for patients with coronavirus infection. Brought up in a succession of orphanages, she left at age 14 with no household skills, no experience, no money or connections. Thanks to Big Change she was able to gain the educational qualifications needed to fulfil her lifelong dream: to enter medical college. She graduated as a nurse two years ago.

Katya writes movingly of the hard work and heroism involved in coronavirus nursing. You can read her story on our website: www.friendshousemoscow.org/two-nurses

We hold her and all her colleagues in the Light.
AVP Ukraine

AVP (the Alternatives to Violence Project) in Ukraine met online for the first time on 21 April, to hold a workshop for their core team. Coordinator Alla Soroka reports, “It’s begun… AVP is now “live” in every sense of the word.”

Of that first workshop she says, “…Well, it was different, but all the same it was warm and productive in the real AVP way.” They are working on a programme which will be launched bit-by-bit.

The Refugee Centre

Lessons for the refugee children in Russian, maths, English, physics, chemistry and some other subjects are still being held. Now they are online and teaching is most often done 1:1. Parents are also joining the classes as they are not working, and it is a way for them to take their mind off the ongoing situation. The centre is trying to provide laptops for families who do not have access to the internet.

Ongoing surveys of the needs of families is gradually becoming a separate area of work. Because many families are unemployed the centre ensures that they have food, that they are safe, and that they know who to contact if they need help. The centre staff work with the Committee for Assistance to Refugee Families, to collect food or money for food, which is delivered to the families. The centre has an influx of new volunteers, because people now have more time and are offering to help with the children. There is even a special email address for new volunteers to apply.

News of Friends

Sergei and Natasha, who run FHM’s service provider company in Moscow, are continuing to work from home, editing books and keeping in touch with projects.

At the time of writing the other members of the Moscow meetings are safe and well. Both of the worship groups have gone online, and a third Meeting for Worship has started which includes Friends from other parts of Russia and elsewhere.

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