

MCC SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Community Assistant – New Hope Center

Term: August 16, 2022 – July 15, 2023

Date Required: August 16, 2022

Location: Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine

Project Theme: HS Health Salt/Yamen

Job Synopsis:

The SALTer/YAMENer will serve alongside New Hope Centre (NHC) helping children and adults to improve their conversational English and lead recreational activities with children in the areas of crafts, sports, music, and more. The participant will also assist with planning and facilitating events for children and families.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

An invitation to an assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Experience providing recreational activities and working with children required (especially age 6-12, but also babies and toddlers).
- Professional training as a teacher is an asset, but not required.
- Strong English language skills.
- Excellent people skills.
- Listening and serving attitude, instead of being the 'expert'.
- Maturity, flexibility, sense of humor necessary.
- Ability to work with little supervision, while also being a good team player.
- Demonstrated organizational skills.
- Flexibility in learning to work in a new organizational culture.
- Interest in networking with other organizations and with individuals.
- Strong motivation to learn the Russian language.

Key Responsibilities:

Throughout the assignment and especially at the beginning, the SALTer/YAMENer will focus on learning Russian to fulfill the duties listed below.

Required duties at NHC:

- Help with leading games, making crafts, helping to make and clean up snacks, etc. for kids 6-12 years old.
- Help to prepare needed materials/equipment for upcoming larger events and celebrations

- Help to run larger group events and camp(s).
- Help to tell the story of New Hope Center's kids and families by taking photos and videos and by writing up English-language articles about programming (i.e., maintaining Facebook page).
- Help write information in English to communicate with new (potential) partners.
- Technical help with on-line sessions for kids\parents (recording and\or broadcasting).
- Participate in staff trainings and meetings.
- Assist with office cleaning when needed.

Optional duties at NHC:

- Teach conversational English to at-risk children/youth who are involved in New Hope Center programming.
- Organizing and leading new clubs for youth, depending on SALTER/YAMENER's skills and talents (i.e., guitar lessons, chess club, computer courses, cooking club, etc.).
- Help NHC staff to improve their conversational English.
- Support staff with kids by babysitting/watching their kids when they come to the office to work (for a couple hours, once or twice a week).
- Play music (guitar/keyboard) during team meetings and organization events.
- Help with some ongoing interior decoration/seasonal decoration in New Hope Center's building.

Duties with MCC Ukraine:

- Communicate regularly with the Ukraine Representative(s) and Connecting Peoples Coordinator.
- Attend all regional retreats and meetings called by the Ukraine Representative(s).
- Link with other MCC workers in the region, using these ties to promote reconciliation and multi-ethnic cooperation as possible.
- Host MCC visitors, such as staff and board members.
- Interpret the realities of the region to the broader MCC constituency through regular written reports and occasional articles for Mennonite publications.
- Develop connections with related local organizations and represent MCC through these interactions.

Assignment Narrative:

New Hope Center (NHC) is a local charitable organization, founded with the collaboration of Mennonite Brethren Missions, that works with a range of socially and economically disadvantaged children and families, internally displaced persons (IDPs), families in crisis (parents and children), and single mothers. NHC also works with foster families, and adoptive families.

Current programs include:

- Family Development Program – in which we work with children from socially disadvantaged families and their parents. Groups of children and their parents participate in programming two evenings a week, and once a month get together for an event or celebration on a Saturday.
- Educational Program which serves children and adults. Children receive tutoring and other assistance with school studies, and parents receive training in holistic growth, family relations and personal development.
- External Education Program of family values for social services and churches.
- Coaching Program: Helping parents and young adults to set personal goals to develop in

certain areas of their choice.

Given that most of New Hope Center’s programming goes on during the afternoon and evening, this is a mostly second-shift placement. Some activities i.e., preparation for upcoming courses/events, can be done during the daytime before evening programming. The SALT/YAMENER would be expected to participate in events held on Saturdays and Sundays but would arrange with their supervisor time off in lieu.

Monday

Russian Study

12 pm -5 pm Participation in New Hope Center programs

Tuesday

12-3pm Office time (English conversation prep, event prep, putting up decorations, writing articles, etc.)

3-8pm Participation in New Hope Center programs

Wednesday

Russian Study

1-3 pm staff meeting

3-8pm Participation in New Hope Center programs

Thursday

12-3 Office time

3-8pm Participation in New Hope Center programs

Friday

Russian Study

(occasional events for families participation)

Saturday and Sunday – days off.

Saturday, once a month - there will be an event or a celebration for families (for example a family picnic) where SALT/YAMENER would be offered an optional responsibility (helping with kids, etc.).

Learning Russian will be important for this position, and this will require time, patience, and lots of practice to be able to communicate. Thankfully, in this position there will also be many ways to contribute while language is in development.

It is a possibility that due to COVID-19 quarantine measures in Ukraine the SALT/YAMENER may not be able to carry out their duties as expected. Should quarantine measures prevent the SALT/YAMENER from working with New Hope Center, an “adaptive” assignment may be necessary. Ukraine program encourages any participant to stay flexible during this service year.

Location Description:

The SALT/YAMENER will live in Zaporizhzhia, a city of approximately 750,000 in eastern Ukraine. MCC’s legacy, while it hasn’t been continuous presence, began in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine) in the 1920s with material resources being shipped to help hungry Mennonites and their neighbors.

Zaporizhzhia is a large city with most amenities, including good health facilities. The vestiges of Communism are evident in the huge boulevards and enormous monuments scattered throughout the city, though a recent de-Communization process has seen some of those monuments taken down and re-naming of streets and locations previously dedicated to Communist politicians.

Most of the food that Europe, and even the world, has to offer is available in restaurants in Ukraine, besides the delicious local specialties. Zaporizhzhia boasts an amazing fruit and vegetable market that is just a few minutes' walk from the MCC office. Downtown, there are good walking streets with enormous sidewalks, with kvass and flowers and ice-cream available on street corners in the summertime, and shwarma available all year round.

There is great public transportation in Zaporizhzhia: "marshutkas," or small minibuses, have routes throughout the city, in addition to the trolleybus and tramlines. The system linking cities all throughout Ukraine is a safe, comfortable, and affordable travel option. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all passengers of public transportation are required to wear protective face coverings. Additionally, public transportation is often crowded and not all passengers follow proper health-safety guidelines. MCC in Ukraine will brainstorm alternative transportation methods with the SALT/YAMENers – and where possible, the SALT/YAMENers should prepare to walk to locations within a reasonable distance.

Zaporizhzhia still has some heavy industry, and regulations around environmental standards are not always adhered to; it is often easier – and cheaper – for a factory to pay the fine incurred by violating regulations and pollution can sometimes be a serious issue. There is a lot of factory dust on the ground and in the air. Many inhabitants of the city use indoor plants as a way to purify the air – and these plants are easily obtained at market or garden shop.

There are several Protestant churches, though most are conducted in Russian. MCC's partners are mainly connected to the local Baptist, Pentecostal, and Mennonite churches. For women, modesty in dress while attending church is important, though fashion and being well put together is also valued. In many of the churches with whom MCC is connected, women wear skirts or dresses (and little or no jewelry) to church or church events, but it would not be considered rude for a foreign woman to wear trousers. It may make most sense for the SALT/YAMENers to relate to the church of the host family or with the church of the partner. While some churches have begun to meet during reduced COVID-19 quarantine measures, MCC in Ukraine does not require SALT/YAMENers to attend a church in-person during active quarantine. The SALT/YAMENers are encouraged to nourish their faith by attending services and connecting with other Christians virtually either locally or in their home church.

Ideally, the SALT/YAMENers will be placed with a host family, who will include them in their everyday activities and fellowship. Living with a host family can be a big advantage in terms of connecting, understanding a culture better, and learning a language faster, though it does mean some loss of independence. Some of the other volunteers at the center may speak some English, but the host family may or may not speak English. There are some contextual realities that may make it difficult to find a host family for a SALT/YAMENers. We make every effort to place participants with families, but if one cannot be found we will provide alternative, appropriate housing.

Ukraine has four distinct seasons; winters can be cold (with temperatures well below 0 degrees Celsius) with snow, and summers can be hot, and humid when a storm is coming.

The post-soviet era has been difficult in Ukraine, encompassing growing issues of poverty, economic collapse, the weakening of the family structure, alcoholism, drug addiction, and homelessness. Many people have been affected by the current armed conflict in the eastern part of the country with regards economic instability, social tension, and political polarization. Those affected include Internally Displaced Persons who have moved from the conflict region to Zaporizhzhia, other cities in Ukraine, soldiers and families of soldiers, and the general public.

In addition to the Reps, there are six Ukrainian National Staff, one Service Worker in the Zaporizhzhia MCC office and 2 SALTers who currently serve with partner organizations. At the time of writing, areas to the east of Zaporizhzhia have been undergoing continued armed conflict. Peace agreements signed in Minsk have had very limited success, but it is important to note that the front line has essentially not moved for the last three years even though ongoing violence continues there. The safety of all our MCC workers is a top priority and MCC has pro-active security and emergency plans in place. At the moment, Zaporizhzhia is quiet, and the MCC workers there feel safe. The situation, of course, will continue to be regularly monitored with regards to safety.

At time of writing, entry requirements for Ukraine dictate that you must have a document confirming receipt of one or more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine included by World Health Organization (WHO) in the list of approved for use in emergency situations or a foreign COVID certificate confirming vaccination against COVID-19 with vaccines that are included in the WHO list of vaccines approved for emergency use. Once placed, MCC will provide you with the most up-to-date process and walk with you to obtain what is needed for a visa and to travel/enter Ukraine.

Challenges:

- COVID-19 remains unpredictable both at home, and around the world. MCC strongly recommends vaccination against COVID-19. Safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 are a vital part of prevention, by reducing individual risk of disease and risk of transmission to others. Vaccination is particularly important for those who are interacting closely with members of the community, those staying with host families, who are traveling, who live in contexts with limited healthcare resources, or who are at higher risk of serious disease. Proof of vaccination may be required in individual cases to fulfill job expectations, for example, if it is required for travel by an airline, a government requirement to enter a country, required by a local partner organization, etc. Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 is currently required by the government to enter Ukraine.
- To prioritize wellness and limit risk to our participants and the local community from COVID-19, assessments of each task will continue on a regular basis. If an assignment is found to be no longer viable, we will do our best to help you secure an alternative assignment.
- Though Ukraine has 4 distinct seasons, not all buildings have central heating; as such, in certain locations it can make sense to layer clothing well in the winter.
- There are currently 11 MCC workers in Zaporizhzhia (in addition to the Reps, there are six National Staff, 1 Service Worker and 2 SALT participants). While other MCCers will certainly be available for support, the reality of living with a host family and working in the community in a new country can feel somewhat isolating. Having a mature individual comfortable being on their own will be important to thrive in this assignment.
- One of the challenges to remaining healthy that would be important to keep in mind is the pollution due to the heavy industry in the region. MCC requires that all workers complete pre-term medical exams to ensure that the individual is healthy and able to carry out the assignment responsibilities within the specific context. Those with existing health

conditions are strongly encouraged to discuss the implications that living in such a context may have for their care and well-being with their health care provider.

- Significant cultural/religious differences may exist. The Christian context in Ukraine tends to be more historically traditional than many Christian communities in Canada or U.S.A. and exclusively has male leadership. There is generally a strong emphasis on Bible teaching. Most services will be conducted in Russian/Ukrainian, however there are a small handful of local churches that offer services in multiple languages (or with English translation).
- In Ukraine, perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals are generally negative, and more strongly so in Christian communities. An openly LGBTQ+ Christian would face significant challenges with acceptance in this context.
- Managing frustration when things don't turn out as expected can be hard. While we do our best to determine and outline job responsibilities with our local partners, assignments really come alive based on the passions, skills, and giftings of an individual. Responsibilities may change or be refined over time in communication with supervisors to meet the ongoing changes and needs within a local context. As such, the greatest characteristics a participant can bring to an assignment are adaptability, flexibility, patience, a willingness to get your hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.
- For those who are very task oriented, it can be a challenge to recognize the importance of "being" instead of always "doing" as building healthy relationships and mutually transformative learning is an important part of the participant experience. We hope participants will come with a desire to walk alongside our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done".

Benefits:

For all SALT/YAMEN assignments, MCC provides:

- All basic needs related to assignment i.e., travel to and from assignment, food & household costs, housing, in-country transportation, etc.
- Modest monthly personal allowance
- Modest monthly worker care allowance
- Full medical coverage—no co-pay
- Educational loan reimbursement
- Vacation days
- Orientation and Re-entry Retreat costs
- MCC in-country meetings and retreat costs
- End-of-term benefits

For more information, see mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen