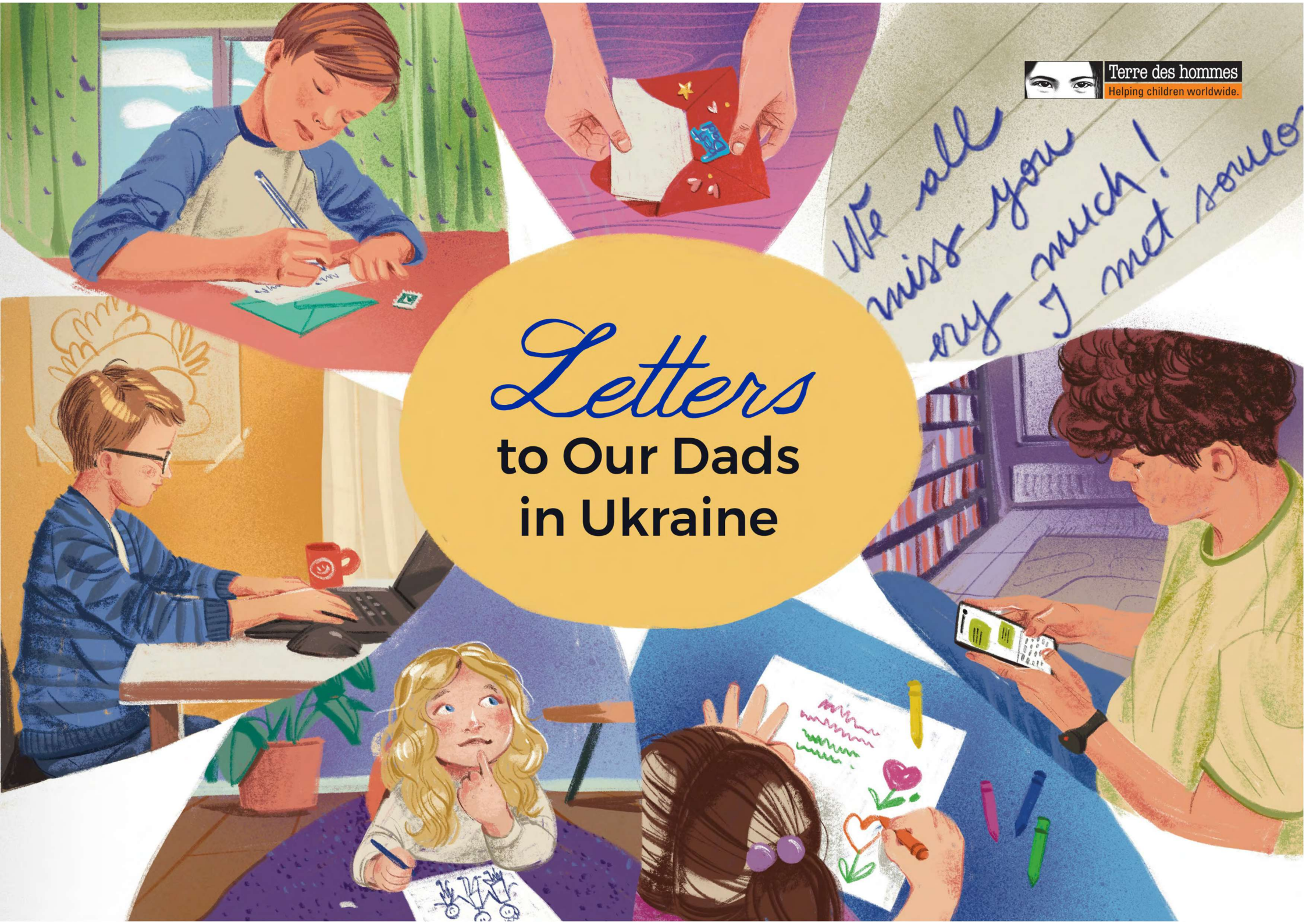




Terre des hommes
Helping children worldwide.

Letters to Our Dads in Ukraine

We all
miss you
very much!
I met Soulo



When war broke out in Ukraine, child-friendly spaces were set up by Terre des hommes Foundation in several transit areas in the capital. By May about 300 children per week were using our friendly spaces, while mobile teams were also working for the wellbeing of children and mothers in semi-residential centers in Bucharest, alongside the socialworkers there. Besides material help, we would like to think we protected in the children's hearts, as we offered some of their childhood (back) to them. Also we tried to offer mothers psycho-social support, so that they could adapt to the new realities, and start their integration smoothly. And last, but not least, we offered them some time to breathe.

We have provided social assistance to Ukrainian families either individually or in partnership with residential centers for refugees and other NGOs. We have collaborated with approx. 12 centers that host families and assist parents with essential products and information to integrate and guide them medically, professionally, legally.

**This is how we have supported more than
11,000 Ukrainian refugee beneficiaries
(adults and children).**

Thanks to our donors and partners we were able to do so much more not only in Bucharest, but also in Constanța and Brașov: a summer school, recreational camps in several locations, a 3 D technology laboratory, socializing and integration events, workshops that develop their talents and encourage them to continue their education.

Our teams offered Ukrainian families the chance to connect with the Romanian community, while also providing them with the means to deal with practical problems and alleviate the suffering caused by war and uprooting. At the same time, we informed the parents about educational options for their children, as any interruption or lack in this field can cause irreversible damage.

We would like to thank to our partner
The Civic Resource Centre in Constanta for organizing
and implementing the activities in the region.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Terre des hommes Foundation (Romania) and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of UNHCR.

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“Dear dad,

Last night we arrived in Bucharest. I was crying and mom was very upset and tired, I could tell. It was really cold and dark and we haven't been to the city yet because we found this waiting room where people were kind and gave us tea and sandwiches. I have already learned this word in English (or is it Romanian?) sandwich, it tastes really good. Not the word, the bread with meat and cheese. It's not like our *holubtsi* or *borscht*, but good enough for now.

We spent the night there, mom had a good sleep, me not so much because I was excited to see what followed next. I had already noticed some nice toys and a small playhouse in a corner, but I haven't played yet. This morning after breakfast I saw some nice ladies there and they saw me and told my mother I could come play, that's why they are here.

Later other children came. The older ones had their own games, but the others were encouraged by the ladies to play different games, we were encouraged to tell our names and even to draw. I also made a drawing, it's our house, you are in it! It's like a wish : this is what I want to see tomorrow, I want to come back and see you there. I know it's not possible, mom said we still need to wait here a while. I wish I knew what we are waiting for, but when I ask, she begins to cry, so I am not asking anymore. Anyway she seems more peaceful since she talked to another lady here and she started to make plans to shop things for us and even find an apartment. I will make many drawings and many wishes for you to be here! ”



“Dear brother,

Now I realize that we were fine at home, we lived like adults, even if we were 16-17 years old. Maybe we didn't have parents, but we had our own apartment, we went shopping when we wanted, we went for walks and to the movies. Now I am here with all the others, it's true, plus the tutor ladies, but it's not like we're in a camp or on vacation. The people at the Center here in Bucharest are nice, but I'm still depressed every day when I see the barred windows on the ground floor. I feel like I'm in prison, and the fact that we're doing school online doesn't help. We are allowed to go out, but only in pairs or accompanied, as if we were children.

Plus the boredom ... In the yard there are the smaller children, usually, we don't really have a choice and stay in the rooms. Fortunately, people from outside came and we made friends. One of the ladies who came is a psychologist, but she's not the kind of rigid doctor who takes notes and looks at you with a frown, she is nice and relaxed and kind. The first time we talked for an hour one day, and then I thought she wouldn't come again, but she came back.”





I talk to her as if she were a friend of my age, although she is about 40 years old, I think. Look, for example, she helped me get rid of the nightmares I had, she told me to draw what I dreamed of (burning trees, collapsed buildings) and in this way I will get the evil out of me or something like that... Anyway, the drawing helped before, you know how it is. It's just that I had lost my inspiration, I didn't even feel like reading anymore....

With the lady who came (by the way, she's Ukrainian, did I tell you?) we sometimes go out in the yard and play games, but not as children, you know? Something smarter, to get to know each other and to understand where we have arrived, how to take advantage of this new experience...

”



“My dear,

I think you will be happy to know that we also celebrated the Independence Day of Ukraine here. I didn't go to any demonstration, because I spent almost the entire day with the children, at an event for them, in a garden in the heart of Bucharest. It wasn't the garden of a house, but a kind of park, where our friends from Terre des hommes organized a big, happy and warm celebration for the children, so it was like you were still at someone's home.

Yara and Ivan learned to "play smarter" - that's what they told me on this occasion, they danced, sang, even did something called music therapy, face painting and other crazy things for children. The ice cream won them over for good, now it will be hard not to have this treat every weekend (it was like the ice cream in Italy, where we had our honeymoon !).





Anyway, for five hours I almost forgot about the war and worries, certainly not about you. I thought of you with every smile of the children... It's hard, but I'm really not allowed to say this when it's probably a thousand times harder for you...

The children also met Romanians, both young and old, because that was the idea: "friendship brings joy", and I met other mothers and exchanged opinions about school... School online doesn't work anymore, really, they need other colleagues, normal lessons, maybe even Romanian lessons...

I forgot to tell you that they drew a lot, landscapes from Ukraine, but also from here in Romania, and some photographers admired their drawings and said they would appear on a website. I also gave a short interview, also about their school. There were also craftsmen, I am knitting you a new scarf too, it has two colors: yellow and blue and a heart in between.

”



At summer school

“ I tried going here to normal school in Romanian, but of course I don't understand much, only the images. Teachers and children are nice, but how can I make friends if I don't speak their language? So I only spoke to the other girl from Ukraine like me...She said she is not staying, her mom is taking her to Germany where they have aunts and uncles. I just hope mom doesn't take us there, too, I don't want to go anywhere so far from you! At least here it's a few hours away.

It's august and I went at a summer school for a few weeks. It's so hard to concentrate at "normal" school, but here they are making it look and sound fun. Plus we learn various stuff: how to make music or use sounds to feel better (sing or play the drums or even shout!). Then we learned how to draw from our imagination or simply draw what we see. It seems this is some kind of therapy and they even told mom that it should be prescribed as medicine for us. I hope I can do this on the long term, maybe even when I grow up. No, I haven't abandoned my dream to be a doctor, but I decided I would be a doctor in peacetime only, not in wartime. As doctors must stay and heal wounded and see horrible stuff, I don't want this, even if it's selfish.

So next we'll give it a go with school in Ukrainian here in Bucharest, I am happy about this, it will be like being home, but not really. I miss talking to many kids and understanding them!

Anyway we hope the war is ending soon, but even if it's not, we wait for you here in Romania, I am sure you can find something to do here. My new friends at Terre des hommes Foundation told me that many parents get jobs here and they get money and it's like being normal again...

”



Sports & Play

“ We are told sports can help you make friends, I was not sure because I think you need to talk to friends, and here they don't speak our language. But guess what, I met so many Romanian kids, and played with them, as a lady translated to us. We had a football match (well, the boys did), games and takeovers, we could even change the rules so that there was no winner, but everyone won. We had fun and really I think we will remain friends, I even made a promise to invite three of the girls back home to Ukraine when it's all over. They like singing like me, so we will organize a contest!

So thank you Terre des hommes, but also Complexul Sportiv Tei, Centrul Social Casa Noastră, Cămin Tei, Școala Gimnazială Avram Iancu, Centrul de Plasament "Pinocchio", Asociația Sportivă Noua Generație Dinamo, Atelierul Hai Hui (photo & video)!





“ We started with a fun game that showed the others what our name was, when we were born and what we like doing. It was fun and good to begin with, because we were a bit stressed and tired. Not that we had school, but because there were some sad news about how we can't come back yet...

After the game, we began the sports exercises, and then we changed the rules in football, can you imagine? They said that we have the power and we decided that the ball is no longer supposed to be hit, but rolled on the ground.

The goal is to understand how we can have fun even if no one wins.

We laughed a lot, because it was like playing pool on the grass, and kids were so careful. They said the goal is to understand how we can have fun even if no one wins (even more!). Next time we'll also prepare an interactive play also based on the movements.”





“ First we split into small groups, as no one can plant a tree by himself. (I like this, because it's not a solitary activity, it's fun.) Then we got hold of our tools and scattered around and found a small area to make it our own. Ah and mom was saying let's go north, it's closer to Ukraine, even if it was only 500 m away!

About trees and roots

People explained and showed us how to do it, because it's not simple business. The tree is like a living being, and I actually read this book a while ago where they said that trees feel the energy of people, so if you're happy when you plant them, they will be happy too. Well now I know we are not very happy with the war and everything, and especially without you and grandpa and grandma here... but we were just enjoying the sun and were happy to be there with nice people. So I guess it can count for being quite happy, and the tree doesn't really know there is a war...does he?

So today we planted many trees, I think each family more than 10, we stayed many hours because it was sunny and beautiful near Ploiesti. I hope we come back here in many years when this is a forest and we show it to our kids and you (you will be very old!). ”





Children can take over the jobs of professionals they chose.

“ I am very excited because I tried my future job! I was a doctor for a day and received patients for consultations in a real medical office! The patients were nice, of course that the real doctor was also there, and he helped me understand what needs to be done. First you listen to the problem, you ask questions and then you consult the person. I even learned how to read the data and operate (almost) all the technology in the medical office.

” I heard other children did this too, because for a week, children can take over the jobs of professionals of their choice here in Romania. So children become IT specialists, security forces (policeman, military pilot), teachers, doctors, actors and painters.





**School is fun
when it's about
something
you like**

“ This week I attended a photography workshop with other teenagers. An awarded photographer (Cătălin Fătu) taught us how to take into account distances, light and many other details when we take photos. We can even use smartphones, but the idea is the same, like in a painting. I learned that you can express emotions even by taking a picture of an object, that is crazy, right? We look at focus, angles, and so on. I took so many notes (in my head) and liked this workshop so much more than other classes.

School is fun when it's about something you like and if the teacher is cool. I plan to take many photos here in Bucharest, everything is new to me anyway, so I will make sure mom buys me a really good phone.

PS: the teacher said I had some talent, he looked at the photos I had in my phone (so even before the class I knew some stuff!). ”



Photography Workshops

Resilience & Innovation Center

“ I am so happy now I finally discovered how I can combine my dream to be an artist and my love for technology!



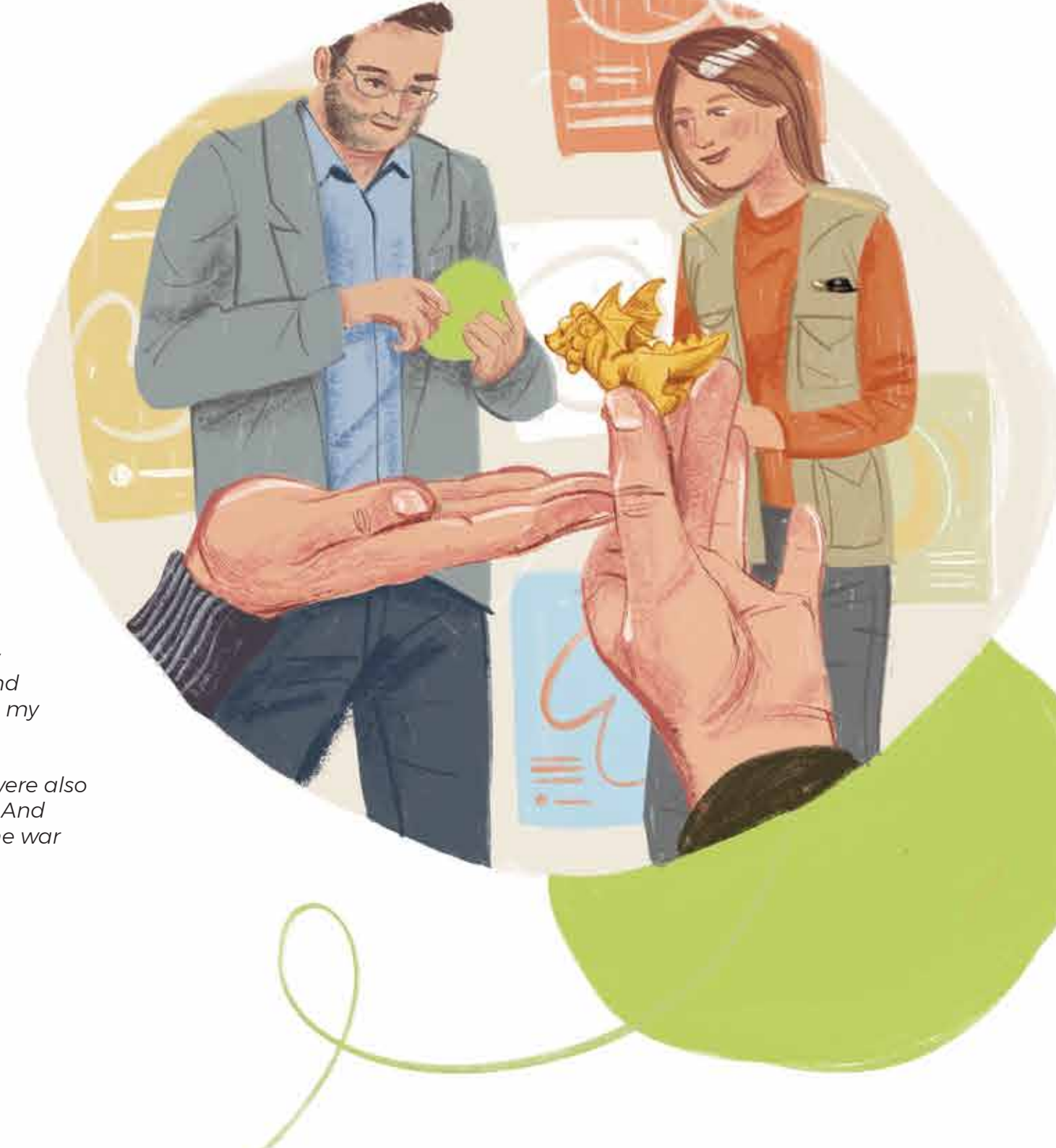
My friends told me we would go to a 3D technology center in Bucharest this month, where everyone will learn 3D printing! This is so much fun and I can't wait to go too. It looks like I will also meet teens from here in Romania, of course if they are also passionate about this.

Entrepreneurs and IT specialists will come and meet us, they will show us how to use the skills, and get jobs or maybe even set up a business.



They tell me creativity is also very important for this (not only technical and digital skills) so I will also be able to use my drawing skills.

You know, Zuckerberg or Gates were also teens when they started so who knows! And Ukraine will need us to rebuild it and the war will be a sad memory. ”



Child Advisory Board

“Remember how I told you about the time we learned to play with natural materials and I was able to make a sort of painting, but not with paint? We had used leaves and tree bark and old flowers. It looked really nice, but I lost it on the road back home, probably when we stopped at the bus station. Anyway I made friends with the guys and girls at that workshop and now we are having sort of regular meetings because our friends at Terre des hommes encourage us to talk. They really liked how we connected and said that it is important to talk about our war-related experiences and everything and support each other and say how children can be helped. So now I am part of this “Child Advisory Board” and every two weeks we talk about projects for children and what we think volunteers should do and how they should talk to children. We also learn about our rights and how we can protect them. I think I also found a mentor in an older friend from Terre des hommes here!

”

We thank our donors and partners
who enabled us to help Ukrainian families
in Romania in 2022.



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See our **Facebook** & **LinkedIn** pages as well!

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