

Heartbeat



HEARTS
ACROSS
ROMANIA

A NEWSLETTER FROM HEARTS ACROSS ROMANIA

JULY 2007

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TRANSITION IN TRANSYLVANIA

Have you ever wondered what happens to children growing up in Romanian orphanages once they reach adulthood? Imagine teens and young adults who have no family involvement and no resources; at risk kids who must transition from institutional life to life on their own.

Hearts Across Romania began a partnership with Florin Catenescu, the director of "A Step to the Future" – a transitional program for young men – on their recent May, 2007 work team trip. Florin, a 29 year old man who grew up in orphanages, knows firsthand the issues confronting young people who have to leave the institutions, and he is committed to helping them. His residential program operates out of an old dormitory in Brasov with a high school on the grounds. Hearts toured his facility where he had several residents living in 2 rooms, with an additional room for Florin's living quarters, and a second room, which he uses as a meeting room. Hearts also saw several more "junk rooms" that had been designated for Florin's program, but they needed to be renovated.

Teen work team members Sami Matthews and Britney Jo Ludkowski immediately approached Hearts' Board members Geanie Burns and Mariana Achiriloaie after seeing the spare rooms and asked if they could begin repainting them. Hearts quickly enlisted the help of some of our Romanian teen boys, and home makeover, Romanian style, began with amazing results. American teens and Romanian teens worked side by side, aided with the help of some of Florin's residents, and within days, the room was transformed into a beautiful living space. The teens scraped walls, applied primer, and repainted, while the rest of Hearts' work team shopped and purchased carpet and curtains for the 2 existing rooms and the new room, new bed linens for the remodeled room, pictures for the wall, and a floor lamp. Sami and Britney Jo used their decorating skills and painted an accent wall, while Hearts purchased a new window and door and paid for their installation.

The transitional project will continue in the coming months as Hearts Across Romania is providing funds to put in a much needed private bathroom for the residents.

Because of the vision, hard work and commitment of Sami and Britney Jo, 3 more young men now have a safe, comfortable place to call home, and Hearts has realized a long-time dream of working on a transitional program.

MANICURES

Special thanks to Kathy Roote, work team volunteer, for donating gift bags to the girls at the Dacia orphanage, including nail polish, lip gloss and hair ornaments. Britney Jo and Sami provided spa services and treated all of the girls to a manicure.

GROUND BREAKING

Armed with garden trowels, claws, and gloves, Geanie Burns and fellow board member Susan Flanagan, along with work team members, Sami and Britney Jo, arrived at the Dacia orphanage ready to plant a garden with the children. Hearts' team had brought gardening implements and gloves they had purchased in the U.S. for the children to use while creating their flower garden. (continued...)



Above: Sami Matthews working on the renovation project.

Below: Results of the makeover.



Susan Flanagan demonstrates gardening skills for the children.

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GROUND BREAKING

After choosing a spot to plant in front of the orphanage, we discovered that the adult sized shovel at the orphanage was locked away in a closet, and no one had access to a key. Using her initiative, Geanie walked down the dirt road and used hand motions to some villagers indicating that we needed to borrow a shovel. They immediately understood, and one of the villagers arrived in a few minutes and quickly dug up the 6' x 4' grassy area for planting. Such is the warmth and kindness of the small villages in Romania...

Many of the children came out to work the flower bed, and they were excited to use their gardening implements. As a Dallas County Master Gardener, Susan had arranged for Hearts to purchase lime green shirts with the Dallas County Master Gardener logo for all of the Dacia children. With shirts and gloves on, the children enthusiastically weeded the remaining grass and learned how to dig gently and to remove stones. They also learned to share the tools – always an ongoing process with children! We taught the children how to spread the zinnia, larkspur and poppy seeds by holding them close to the ground and letting go slowly as they covered the area. We can't wait to go back to Dacia to expand our garden and to see our zinnias blooming.



Dacia boys get in the act of planting flowers.



Work team members Britney Jo Ludkowski and Sami Matthews

other things. Hearts left additional funds in Romania to continue the transitional project and to get dental work for the Dacia children.

Thanks to Sami and Britney Jo for all their hard work raising money before the trip and for the energy and enthusiasm they brought to the work team.



A painting by one of our Romanian teenagers displayed at the "Hearts Blooms" garden party.

OUR HEARTS BELONG TO SAMI

Sami Matthews has stolen our Hearts by raising over \$20,000 before leaving on her second work team trip in May. The final number will be even higher as donations continue to come in. Sami solicited relatives, friends, neighbors and her father's business associates with incredible results. A senior at the Selwyn School in Denton, Sami has a passion for the children of Romania that is inspiring to all of us.

Sami's friend, Britney Jo, joined her on the work team, and she also raised money for projects in Romania. Funds raised by the girls were used on the transitional project, a party for the Dacia orphanage and their neighbors in the village to celebrate International Children's Day, sponsorship of a summer trip to the Black Sea for the Dacia orphanage, teen outings and activities, and part of the cost of a laptop computer for a young college graduate, among

SPECIAL THANKS TO JACK & LAURA MATTHEWS

Hearts would like to thank Sami's parents, Jack and Laura Matthews, for their support, including a cash donation, gardening implements for the children, and in-kind donations of clothing and shoes.

GARDEN ART

Hearts Across Romania hosted their first fundraising garden party on May 5th, where they displayed artwork for purchase from several talented Romanian teenagers. Hearts Blooms – a spring garden party – was possible in large part because of the generosity of Alan Rister and Greg Armstrong, who donated their lovely grounds, complete with a stone gazebo and a fountain for the event. Hearts would like to thank Alan and Greg for their gift, as well as volunteers Kathy Roote, Michael Kramp, Travis Shelton, Jerry Williams and Leigh Ann and Francis Dibble for all of their hard work in making the party a big success.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.HEARTSACROSSROMANIA.ORG