

Heartbeat



HEARTS
ACROSS
ROMANIA

A NEWSLETTER FROM HEARTS ACROSS ROMANIA

JULY 2009

MAY, 2009 WORK TEAM RETURNS

What do you get when you mix 7 college students, 17 large suitcases and two sponsors together? A great Romanian Work Team! Hearts Across Romania had the pleasure of hosting six students from William & Mary College on our May work team trip. With the last minute addition of a local SMU student, the group total rounded out to seven.

The William & Mary group included Andrea Anderson, Steffi Fitter, Diana Gal, Andy Garden, Katie Moody, and Asha Williams, who traveled to Dallas from their respective home towns on May 20th to meet and train with Hearts' board members before departing for Romania the following day.

Sami Matthews, a repeat volunteer and currently a student at SMU, had agreed to participate in the training session, along with previous work team members Jerry Williams and Leigh Ann Dibble. These veteran volunteers gave up their evening to share their thoughts and stories about the Romanian children, the country and the culture.

Sami, who first volunteered with Hearts at the age of 16, had begun toying with the idea of joining the group only three days before they were to depart for Romania, but she was still uncertain the night before the trip if she would be able to go. She was waiting to hear about a possible summer internship out of state, but in the end, she couldn't stay away from the Romanian children; she had to go on the trip. This was her third time to participate as a work team member with Hearts, and her fourth time to travel to Brasov.



The May work team with painting supplies

The team began their work with a picnic at the Dacia orphanage, where they introduced the children to s'mores, and expanded to include numerous trips to Ladybug, a gypsy day care center outside of Brasov. Diana Gal, team member and native Romanian, was a big help with her language skills in translating for the other volunteers while working with the youngsters. Hearts was able to fulfill Ladybug's wish list of new riding toys for the pre-school age children, which the college team seemed to enjoy as much as the kids did.

Hearts added several new organizations to their list on this trip, including a severely handicapped facility, where they donated glass baby bottles and purchased a much needed hot water heater. Hearts also spent some time at the girls' orphanage in Rupea, where they sponsored the art program for the children.

The team experienced two days of back-to-back bowling competition as they hosted separate pizza parties – one for young men in the "One Step to the Future" transitional program and another for our Romanian teens from the orphanages – many of whom are now college students themselves. The social activities provided a great way for the U. S. students and the Romanian youths to get acquainted with each other.

Above left: One of our girls at the Rupea orphanage



Young people continue to set an example for volunteering and giving. Smith To Do, a social organization at Smith College in Massachusetts, made 15 beautiful blankets for our children at the gypsy day care center. Kelsie Hoke, a student at Smith, found Hearts on the Internet and contacted Geanie Burns about making the blankets. She organized this project and shipped the blankets to Geanie in time for the May trip, so special thanks to Kelsie and her group for choosing Hearts for their charitable project.

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

Radu Achiriloaie
Patricia Adams
Andrea Anderson
Tonia Camina
Lucia Cristescu
Ary de Vries
Constance de Vries
Leigh Ann Dibble
Chris Ely
Steffi Fitter
Diana Gal
Andy Garden
Virginia & Tupper Garden
Richard Gibson
Elizabeth Hoyle
Sami Matthews
Katie Moody
Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church
Smith To Do
The Shoe Bank
Fanel & Mihaela Vasile
Alex Weiss
Asha Williams
Jerry Williams

Hearts would like to thank the congregation of Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church in Roanoke, Virginia for all of their generous in-kind donations. Special thanks to Tupper Garden, pastor, and his wife, Virginia, who packed and shipped 4 large suitcases and 3 boxes full of donations from church members, as well as some of their own personal donations. The suitcases arrived in Dallas in time to be included on the work team trip. Tupper and Virginia are the parents of Andy Garden, work team member from William & Mary.



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HEARTS CONTINUES WITH THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Hearts' team continued their partnership with Florin Catanescu's transitional program by renovating another room in the dormitory making a safe, comfortable place for three more people to live. These young men, who have become part of the Hearts' family, need our emotional support as much as they need our financial help. Lacking the support of a loving family, they want and need our time and attention more than the material things that we provide for them.

Hearts would like to extend a special thanks to Jerry Williams and Leigh Ann Dibble, who have developed a strong bond with these young men and continue to support this program financially. They have sponsored Christmas for the boys for the past two years, and they donated money in May to be equally divided among the guys. The boys were given cash to buy whatever they chose, a rare occurrence for them.



Athletic shoes bring smiles to young men in the transitional program

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES

Blessings came Hearts' way this spring in the name of Michael Barringer, who runs a non-profit that provides orphans all over the world with comfortable shoes. He began collecting donated new or gently used shoes over twenty years ago to give to needy adults and children across the world. His organization, the Shoe Bank, continues to be primarily a one person operation today.

Susan Flanagan, Board Member, requested shoes from Mr. Barringer for the May trip, and he was happy to donate them. The young men in our transitional program were thrilled to receive modern, stylish athletic shoes that fit well. And everyone knows how important fashionable shoes are for young people. Orphanages in Rupea and Codlea also received shoes for their younger kids.



Proud of her portrait

Please visit the Shoe Bank's website at www.shoebank.org before you throw away a pair of good shoes. They have depositories in many retail stores, athletic facilities and schools through the Metroplex area. Susan did not realize fifteen years ago when she dropped several pairs of athletic shoes in one of their depositories that she would one day be delivering shoes from that same organization to children in Romania.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Many children in Romania will now have portraits of themselves to document their young lives thanks to The Memory Project (www.thememoryproject.org). This organization collects photos of children in orphanages and distributes them to high school art students across the country, who then paint portraits of the kids. Hearts furnished The Memory Project with photos of children in the orphanages, young men in the transitional program and pre-schoolers at the gypsy day care center, and in return, we received beautiful portraits of our Romanian children.

No one prepares a life book for these children growing up in orphanages to validate their childhood, so thanks to the following schools for their artistic images: West Babylon High School, West Babylon, NY; Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, KY; Randolph School, Huntsville, AL; Central Visual & Performing Arts High School, St. Louis, MO; and Hannah Koenig, Boxford, MA.