



The Romanian Children's Humanitarian Foundation

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Give Eur-Hope summer time children's camp 2024 update

It gives such great pleasure to forward you this report of the Give Eur-Hope sponsored 2024 children's summer camps on behalf of St RCHF. These camps were recently held at Vorona Monastery in Botosani County of Romania. Teamwork and support has again brought outright happiness to very needy children who all had a fantastic weeks holiday in early august with myself and 2 volunteer helpers, both who are school nurses.

The good news doesn't end there either as there was sufficient funds left over to make 2 separate full day outings for children at both Borzesti village and Iliseni village also in Botosani County. Both are villages forgotten in time where hardship is at every corner. These marginalized children therefore also with your support enjoyed being the same to the Monastery Vorona. In both of these days I had teachers and a couple of children's Mothers who came to help.

Temperatures.

With days of over 40c this summer in mid July I had to be well prepared in arranging activities before the heat of the Sun arrived in the middle of the day and after the worst part of the heat subdued in the late afternoon and I am pleased to say that we had no child suffering from the effects of the searing heat.

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GEH summer camp 2024

a total of **26 children** from Stefanesti including children from Stanca village and Bobulesti village arrived on the free transport bus provided by Stefanesti Mayor office at Vorona Monastery on the 15th July to start their weeks holiday and as always I was happy to greet each child and the 2 lady nurses who came voluntary to help and whom I have known for many years.

To have children from the rural villages where is severe hardship and a marginalized life at a Monastery is perfect at there is no better location that in the house of the Lord above in my opinion. On debarkation from the bus the children were taken to their dormitories that are to a very high standard with separate dormitories and bathroom facilities for both sexes. Now was time to wash hands and faces and for children to then all go with me to the 2 Churches within the large Monastery grounds to pray. Afterwards be shown around the historic Monastery and its grounds including gardens and a large lake that is used as a fish farm by the Orthodox Sisters within the Monastery area itself that all dates back to around the year 1500 and is surrounded by a large forest with clean air and beauty all around as far as the eye can see.



Each morning at 06.30 children would rise from their beds, wash and dress and then go over to the Church by 07.30 to participate in the final hour of the morning service kneeling on the floor to pray along with the Sisters of Mercy. Straight after Church ended children would be shown to the large dining room and served a full breakfast by the Sisters who make fresh and tasty food including hot home made bread. Natural tea to drink and fresh water also. Here I point out that I know the villages these children come from and the fact that because of financial hardship many in school term time even in the hard winter months go to school with just a slice of dry bread at best and if lucky a cup of tea or a cup

of water from the street well more often than not. In this case for many was a surprise to be offered a full breakfast with fresh bread, eggs, freshly made pate, tomatoes, lettuce and other season vegetables, plus for each child a breakfast bun to end filled with fresh chocolate.

After Breakfast children were split into groups and daily routines began which included trekking in the vast forest whilst exploring the nature all around and each child taking a small bottle of water with them daily. Other activities included outdoor sports activities including sack races, three legged races and organized ball games to test skills as well as badminton and tennis for others. All of these activities took place on the high ground outside the Monastery walls where is a huge grass area in front of the forest. Again sufficient fresh water was available for every child to drink bearing in mind the high temperatures. Each day activities changed for instance on one day children took part in a pick the apple contest where a child lifts a fresh apple from a bowl of water and all of these activities brought great joy and was shared with sheer enthusiasm by the children. The idea behind all of these kinds of activities is to allow children to experience and enjoy free time away from the mobile phone and social networks as so many children nowadays don't play, simply sit on a bench looking at their mobile phones.

On another day children in one group walked the 2 kilometers at the edge of the forest all the way down to Verona village where I had arranged them to visit the historic cultural house and village museum alike.

Workshops

Workshops are always a part of summer camps and I held 2 such workshops this year and again thank the Sisters of Mercy for the use of the conference room at the Monastery. The first workshop was a get to know each other workshop theme where each child would stand and talk about themselves, their likes, dislikes, how many brothers and sisters they have as well as how they feel they fit in or not within their village. A truly interesting session and one which brought children together all realizing they had similar thoughts and similar lifestyles. Of course some proudly stated they had a mobile phone and had many friends on social networks and this allowed me to explain about the dangers posed of having friends on social networks they had never met. One child proudly stated for instance he had 380 plus friends including as far away as in Asian countries and when asked how he understood the difference in language he said I use google to translate!!

Others had friends in EU countries including Spain, Italy and Germany and so I had to explain the dangers of having friends on social media sites that one doesn't know and has never met as there can easily be huge dangers posed in having such social friends. After all children are naive in many ways as are still growing up.

Moving on and there were 4 children who brought tears to my eyes as they used social media to be in touch with their parents who are abroad working and in 3 of those cases was with both parents abroad thus a lack of hands on family love that is essential to each child from a parent at home.

The second workshop was a public health workshop with a difference. Children in special from marginalized backgrounds are susceptible to illness far more than children from families with means. In this case I spoke of the way a child can help themselves for instance by purchasing an apple or banana rather than bag of crisps when at the village shop and gave other example also before moving on to provide a board game for the children to participate in. Romania has the highest rates of Tuberculosis in all of Europe year after year and many are pediatric cases. Over 10 years ago I designed a public health board game based on the subjects of healthy living and Tuberculosis awareness which I have used in many schools in Northeast Romanian with success over the years. Now I allowed the children at camp to learn as they played this important public health game and it worked a treat as the question and answer session proved after all was finished. In my view if learning is made interesting then children enjoy their lesson and learn easier!

In one afternoon the Mayor of Stefanesti and his Deputy arrived also to help with the children and brought ice creams also for each child.

Food was terrific and all 3 full meals each day prepared by the Sisters of Mercy who know me many years now went down a treat with each child. The menu was varied and included fresh fish, cheese and potatoes pie made with fresh cheese, Milk made deserts again all fresh as the Monastery has its own herd of cows and in total far better than any restaurant food as was all natural products from within the huge monastery grounds which include farm land. No child went hungry and all cleaned their plates so good was the food.

Late on the Friday afternoon 2 buses again paid for by the Stefanesti Mayor office arrived to take the children home with many wanting to stay and extra few days if that was possible Mr Brian and a few tears among other children, thus all had truly enjoyed their organized Give Eur-Hope summer camp and returned home safe and very happy.

We brought extra joy to other needy children too!

Along with some GEH funds left over from the 2023 summer camp funds I was also able to go that bit further this year and provide 2 full days out also at Vorona Monastery for children at Both Iliseni and Borzesti villages. Mid-day and afternoon meals again being provided by the Sisters of Mercy whilst activities again included trekking in the beautiful forest and organized sports activities on the grass area above the Monastery.

Borzesti is a village in Botosani County still underdeveloped and in the main part with beaten earth tracks for roads and its a village that time forgot and in which children are left behind so was an ideal group to take on a day to The Monastery with their teacher and 3 parents who arranged transport themselves for the children and who I was delighted to meet.

The other group taken on a different day was from Iliseni village that is a part of Santa Mare complex of villages and again is a forgotten part of this complex with again beaten earth tracks for roads once off the main road that passes through the village. I know the school director and both teachers at Iliseni and they were like the children over the moon with this offer of a day away with the children from the drab village area.

Monasteries in Romania are very reserved places of worship and so I asked the abbot with trepidation after the GEH summer camp if I could bring 2 separate day groups and her face lighted up with a huge smile saying of course we welcome you and these children and will provide all we can for them and this was so nice and humbling for me too!

The 2 days brought again sheer happiness to the children from both villages who went home all thanking me for this what they called special treat which in fact was again brought about by Give Eur-Hope in our many years of healthy collaborations in helping bring a new sense of life and hope to marginalized children.

A selection of photographs followed by my final review in pages below.



Accommodation house and dormitories at Vorona Monastery where the children slept





Morning prayer, Breakfast and then a day filled with activities for each child.











