



School For Life

Newsletter Edition 19, June 2008

Registered Charity No. 1062953

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Școala Pentru Viață

Welcome to the bi-annual newsletter for School for Life.

Thank you for your interest in our charity. Every six months you will hear about the latest developments at the project in Siret, and our fundraising efforts in the UK and Romania to support the growth of the work that is changing the lives of many young people with special needs in Siret.

School For Life is a registered UK charity dedicated to funding children and adults brought up in an orphanage in Siret, Romania (who now live in a Neuropsychiatric Hospital institution), providing special needs education and training so they can develop the skills they need to lead fulfilling lives. These sessions

are delivered in a school building our charity has purchased and built in the community of Siret, northern Romania. Therapeutic sessions are also provided in the Hospital for the young people not able to come to our facility.

The money raised in the UK by School for Life is sent to our sister organisation in Siret, "Școala Pentru Viata", which is led and staffed exclusively by qualified people from the local community. The staff members include 2 Directors, 6 Teachers, 2 Teaching Assistants (formally orphans from the Institution), a Medical Assistant and Night Supervisor. We also support 4 young people to live in the community, enabling them to follow further education and local employment opportunities.



Hard at work at the SPV School

All funds received go directly to the project in Siret (except for bank charges to transfer funds to Romania). All other costs, including regular trips to Siret to support the project and feedback to the UK charity meetings, and all publicity, are met by the Trustees and School For Life Friends themselves. So more than 99p of every pound you have given goes directly to the children and young adults who need it. Thank you!

Latest report from Siret, Romania:

Ann Baxters, mother of 6 children aged 2-21, went to Siret for the first time, with Marianne Lownsbrough, Trustee, in April 2008. These are her reflections written on her last day there.

My time in Romania has been an emotional rollercoaster to say the least- and no, I don't mean the experience with the outside loo, though that was a little concerning at times.

What is striking about this visit is the people are so giving. They want to make a difference to the young people living in the Neuropsychiatric Hospital. Doina (Director of Administration, SPV) and her husband Radu are so passionate about family life, and open that up to the young people living in the

Institution who access the Școala Pentru Viata School. And they looked after me so well I have been totally fattened up for Christmas!

I have met people who work hard to bring changes to improve the young peoples' lives, and it's not just by giving aid, but by really teaching them to be independent- giving them better choices and enabling them to reach their own potential. I had the pleasure of working with a group of young people at the Școala Pentru Viata School. I felt that even though I did not have the

AGM
October 18th 2pm
77 Windermere Rd
Lancaster
Contact Dave Emptage
All welcome



← Blow Football!

language to communicate with them, I could engage just with simple human touch and body language. Through play, the young people can explore concepts of life and in this way can learn new skills. This was evident in Mihaela who lives in the Hospital and comes to the School. What stood out to me about this young, beautiful, vibrant woman, once classed as “mentally irrecuperable” by the Romanian authorities, is that with guidance and opportunities she has the potential to enjoy life to the full- yet has to return to live in the Neuropsychiatric Hospital and its meagre conditions.

We took simple resources such as newspaper and tape into the sessions, and explored ways of using them- making flowers, decorations, and even designed the latest clothing! The idea went down well, as money for resources is always a problem, and encouraging the teachers to use everyday items that might otherwise be discarded can make a difference.

I felt the young people got a lot from the session, and for me it was a chance to engage with them. The play changed to a game of “blow football”- hearing the laughter was fantastic, especially from Elena, a young woman with the most amazing giggle! Elena had recently received a plastic prosthetic arm and was getting used to it. But she could blow the football like the best of them!

My visit to the Hospital to collect the young people coming to the Scoala Pentru Viata School made me a little anxious. The Hospital has young people with a range of disabilities, and the conditions there were better than I had expected, as so many improvements have been made by the new Hospital staff team. However it still looks like a jail, with caged stairwells, and young people with severe disabilities rocking. It must be hard for the young people to all live together with such a range of abilities, and must affect the mental well being of all the young people living there.

The last day of my trip was very emotional. We were invited to join Doina and Radu and their family to the cemetery for Easter celebrations remembering their loved ones who have passed away. The cemetery was full of families and coloured garlands. We were shown the small graveyards where the children from the orphanage who didn’t survive, were laid to rest. Here, a group of young people from the Neuropsychiatric Hospital had come to pay their respects to their lost friends. I cannot express enough how through all that life has thrown at these people, how they still give so much.

The priest went through the cemetery to each family grave, blessed the grave and family, and shared the festival food. Families brought extra packs to share with others who were in need, as many gypsy travelling families and their children were also there, one with a child of about 12 with such scars and deformities it was hard for me to keep the tears back, and affected me quite badly. As a mother, I could not imagine exposing my child in this way, but as a mother desperate for food I would do the same.

In writing this I cannot find the words to truly explain what this trip has meant for me. Maybe that in itself means that words are not needed, and actions give those less fortunate a chance to blossom to their potential.

This trip has been thought provoking, and has made me think about my own family issues. The way we live in our society could be regarded as selfish, as we forget in our busy lives how important quality time with our family is. What I have seen and felt over the week is how the customs and traditions in Romania mean a lot to them. I will take this home with me.



Ann (left) with Doina, Director of Administration SPV (centre)

Skills For Life

By Marianne Lownsborough, Trustee

During my trip to Siret in October 2007, I saw more than ever before the real potential in the young adults attending the Scoala Pentru Viata School to produce items that could be sold in their own right- things that people in the UK might purchase because of quality and not out of "pity". These items are produced by the young people as part of their therapeutic work in the Neuropsychiatric Hospital where they live.



Sewing workshop space in the Hospital

My recent trip in April 2008 brought me with "a mission", to take this vision further. We have found that EU funding for the project in Siret, which is our future aim for the School, will focus on projects connecting the training and qualifying of a workforce. This is the same sort of funding that my training company in England, Playscape, uses. I have seen students in England with less potential succeed in obtaining training grants, so why not the young adults in Siret who so far have had few opportunities given to them? I wanted to suggest that these young adults should have access to vocational training, NVQs, which can be highly relevant when the skills are there but the academic ability is not. The young people accessing the Scoala Pentru Viata School may be classed as having "psychiatric" problems or being "handicapped", but if they have potential, then achieving qualifications will help them secure a future. We need to have that vision.

We arrived in Siret late on Sunday night, the journey taking just 19 hours from my home near Hull to Siret, northern Romania. Best time ever, door to door! Because our trip fell at Easter time, Monday was a day of celebration and family time. We had a meal with Radu and Doina (our Director of Administration and her husband), who have adapted their life so that those who live at



First design for a handbag! Hoping to sell for about £25.

the Foundation, or Scoala Pentru Viata School, have become extended family to them. The same way they treat us whenever we visit! Their daughter Olivia (wife of William, a School For Life Trustee), was also there and translated when my Romanian would not suffice. We had a traditional Easter meal, which took 9 hours! Half way through our Educational Director Stefan joined us. Even though it had not been planned we were soon discussing the visions of a work force and training. As usual for them, they are keen to explore ideas and discuss the future direction of the project, even on their days off.

The ideas were embraced, with questions over the rights of those in



Wood work skills in the Hospital

Institutions to access general vocational training. The next step was to take the ideas to the Director of the Neuropsychiatric Hospital where the young people live. He was keen to move forward with our vision, and arranged for us to go into the Hospital and discuss with those who run the therapeutic workshops. When visions start to become reality it is great to see people come on board, envisioned and excited about the possibilities. This is where the fun started!

We looked carefully at the skills that we were being shown. It was great to have Ann with us, a Playscape Assessor and Trainer who works with me in England. Her insight and ideas were a

great help. After much discussion and help from Olivia (Doina's daughter, who lives in the UK and is very stylish!), we ended up with 2 fashion bags, a belt design made to UK fashion design but with traditional Romanian weaving. Templates were made ready for the next day. We also thought about artwork, and ended up with 2 templates; a flat wooden shoe with lace work to help teach children to tie bows, and a wooden "snake" made of 10 blocks of wood laced together with numbers painted on in the colours of the Romanian flag.

Next we discussed with Oltea who is in charge of the sewing workshop in the Hospital. She has 10 students who can sew, and felt there were more with potential. We agreed a pattern, complicated, but Oltea embraced it well. Later I met one of the sewing students cleaning the roadside, to earn a little money. She reminded me that she can sew, and I said I knew, and how good she was. She told me about the new bags she was making to the design, put her thumb up and smiled, saying they could do it in time! The challenge had been taken up at all levels. Here was a young girl written off by so many from the age of 3, having lived through appalling conditions, now confident in her ability to produce items that can be sold abroad in their own right. We will write a piece to go with the products, explaining where they come from. We ask that people buy them because they like them, and because they think they are of good quality. But also, to remember the journey that those who have made them, have come through.



Fabulous belt

The items discussed are still in production, with research to be done regarding the safety marking for items sold abroad. Below: Recycled newspaper flowers for a fun creative session at SPV (items not for sale!)



Green Issues at SPV

After 17 years of coming to Romania, I still appreciate how far ahead they are in reusing items we in the UK might throw out as rubbish. There is so much more value in a box or blanket for imaginative play, than in a specific toy with limited use. So when joining a session with the SPV teachers, we introduce new ideas using readily available materials- flour, salt and water for salt dough, dens out of sheets, designing clothes, puppets and flowers with newspaper... Not only does this provide cheap resources, but encourages imaginative play. Some empty boxes were on their way to the bin- well, more resources for another day ready to make use of.



Chopping wood for the carbon neutral central heating system at the SPV school

The school building is heated by carbon neutral wood burning boiler system. All of our resources are locally sourced from within Romania, as we believe in supporting the local economy, and making sure that if anything breaks it will be easy to fix- and won't have to be sent back to the UK! The plot of land the school sits in is well used with fruit and vegetables produced, giving the young people valuable experience in nurturing life and developing traditional skills valued by the community they live in.

You can help us be "green" by requesting an emailed version of the newsletter by PDF instead of a paper copy. Please contact info@schoolforliferomania.org.

Do you use Internet shopping like Tesco home shopping, Amazon, Play.com and over 400 more? You can help us raise money for School for Life at no cost to you!

- Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and click on register
- Enter your details, choosing School For Life Romania as your chosen good cause
- When you shop on line, log on to easyfundraising.com first and select your retailer from the list. Shop on the retailer's site as normal, paying their normal prices, using their normal website, and their normal credit card security measures
- School for Life gets a commission from the retailer at no cost to you!

Do you surf the Internet? Websites pay the search engine every time someone clicks on a link. One company rebates some of this money to charity.

Go to www.everyclick.com, and type in School for Life Romania. Enter your details and sign up- set the everyclick page as your homepage, and everytime you use the internet, money will be donated to School For Life!

Thinking about re-mortgaging? Please use quotes4charity.co.uk who are donating money to School For Life everytime you ask them for (no obligation) financial advice.

Other ways you can help us raise money for School For Life...

TShirts: Plain white with SFL/SPV logo. Sizes S, M & L. £5

Hand made cards for all occasions: min suggested donation £1 per card.

Also, information boards and presentations available for fundraising events, and collecting tins for your local friendly shop. Contact Lizzy ejkeetley@hotmail.com, tel 07968 302424. Thank you!

financial report

by Keith Lownsbrough, Treasurer

The **cash balance** at the end of April stood at £13,396.21.

We transferred £9,500 to Romania at the beginning of May to cover the full budget until the end of August.

Our **monthly income** of Standing Orders currently stands at £1,600.50 per month. £540 is received per annum in quarterly or annual payments. Of this, £1280 per month is given under the **gift aid scheme** giving a minimum tax rebate of £4,332 next year.

cash requirement projections, in £ sterling:	annual income (less additional fundraising):
SPV staff & assistants 12276	Standing orders 19 200
Taxes 6960	Tax relief 4 332
Building costs 1680	
Other costs 4255	
Car costs 1080	
Residents costs 2400	
Total £28,651	Total £23,532

We are getting more income, but costs are also increasing.

We have agreed to send out £9 500 every 4 months whenever possible, with £5 667 minimum with the extra up to £9 500 if we have the money. In this way, we can give a definite level of support, with the emphasis on Romania to find the extra financial support. We can be sure of supporting the lower level, with the higher figure being raised by additional fundraising.

In the short term, an increase in standing orders and other donations and fundraising mean that we expect to be in credit by £796 for the August 2008 payment to Scoala Pentru Viata. At the last Trustees meeting in March 2008, we expected to be £196 overdrawn at that point. However, by August 2009 we project that we will be £4172 overdrawn if the full budget is transferred to the SPV project until then.

THE CHALLENGE IS TO RAISE OVER £4000 IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS!

Recent **fund-raisers** include:

£90 William Leith Bakers Shop Collecting Tins (available free from secretary ejkeetley@hotmail.com), £167 Willerby Methodist Wives Group, £202 Carole Grant/Lesley Hunter homemade cards sales, £50 Sancton Methodist Church, £30 Brough Methodist Womens Fellowship, £80 Quotes for Charity, £61 Everyclick.com, £32 Easyfundraising.com, £250 Talbot Lane (Sheffield) Methodist Ladies, £416 St Bernadettes Church Pangbourne, £160 Toward Church, £67 Total Tribute, £225 Rhythm for Romania, £20 advance donation for Dave's Gig at the Gregson (A HUGE SUCCESS WITH OVER £1000 RAISED ON THE NIGHT- full details in next edition!).

THANK YOU, as you can see fundraising is crucial!

School For Life Romania

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